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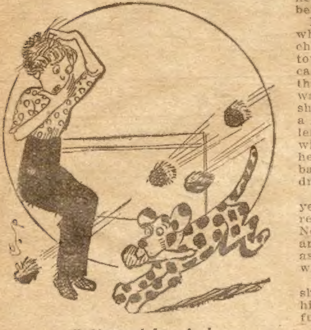
RL.

A FOUR-FOOTED CUPID

By CLARA PARKER



Followed by clods.

NO, NERO did not rescue Miss Amoy from a watery grave. He did not find her lying wounded by the roadside and rush barking to her friends for aid. Neither of these things would be liable to happen to a woman who lived by herself in a small cottage in a very small and sleepy town.

At first Nero had not even seemed an unalloyed blessing to Miss Amoy. In fact, she had regarded him as something which must be nobly borne. Her brother, who lived in another town, had called and casually left him in her charge for a "day or so," while he went on a visit. His stay had, however, lengthened into weeks, during which time she had received a postal card from her brother assuring her that he was having "a bully time."

She was not having a "bully time," nor anything like it, and when she received the card she came as near being vexed with her brother as she ever had been during her thirty years of life.

In fact she said, "Oh, pshaw!" and tossed the card down quite pettishly, though there was a very interesting picture on it of the grain elevator in the town where her brother was visiting, and she was making a collection of picture postals.

Nero had many peculiarities with which she was not accustomed to living.

It had been her habit during the ten years since her father died, to make every Saturday a loaf of brown and white bread, an apple pie, and a half-sized batch of either cookies or doughnuts, and this, with a few griddle cakes and things like that, kept her larder supplied.

She was not stingy. Indeed, no! She was never without pickles and preserves in the cellar, and bought often as many as three bananas and four or five oranges a week, but she simply had no great appetite for food.

Her first few days, however, as caterer for Nero wrecked every theory she had formed along eating lines. He seemed hollow to his hair, and though he came on Sunday, by Monday night the pantry was empty and Nero was dragging his full weight on his chain and howling for more.

She was desperate. To be baking bread on Tuesday seemed to her almost as irregular as to be cold-starching on Sunday, and she felt like apologizing to the delivery boy when he came that dav and caught her with her hands in the dough.

To her Nero's intemperate appetite was a crime. He hesitated at no indecency to gratify it, dragging to the floor and eating all the meat from a ham bone, she had hanging in the woodshed, where she had shut him for safe keeping the first night of his stay.

It was awful to tie him up and listen to his howling, but it was still worse to see him leaping from a neighbor's yard followed by clods or stones, holding unsavory food in his mouth. It made him seem such a shameless tramp, and yet such things as she would have left over from a meal—the rind from a slice of bacon, the crust from a slice of toast, or half a potato—made no impression on his hunger.

The second week of his stay things climaxed as things always will. He was in vile repute in the neighborhood. For a full day after he had dragged down the ham bone and devoured in one great orgy what would have made five excellent meals for her, she had expected him to die of overeating, but instead he had broken out and come home later with the mangled remains of a chicken. At the risk of her life, she felt, she had snatched the claws and most of the feathers from him, and buried them in her ash pile to keep the crime from being traced to her door.

He knocked down the clothes bars on which her one pillow slip, two handkerchiefs, one bath, one face, and two dish towels were airing, after having been carefully ironed, and so muddied them that she was forced to put out an extra wash. He ate up a cornstarch pudding she had set out to cool, and tipped over a pint of milk which the milk boy had left at her door. Her yard was filled with bones, and for three days a horse's head glared at her from just under the back porch before she found courage to drag it out and bury it in the garden.

All of these things seemed unbearable, yet, up to the climax, she was able to rest at night; but the night of the climax Nero began to bark about ten o'clock and kept barking. She was not at all astonished at his being wakeful, but she was bitterly ashamed.

"He has indigestion and I know it," she thought. "I really wouldn't care if his stomach did pain him, but it is dreadful to have him disturb the neighbors."

When she could stand it no longer she got up, but without the slightest notion what to do. She had never thrown things at a dog, and besides, she felt she could not throw anything large enough to make an impression on that huge, fat dog.

In connection with her certainty that Nero was suffering from gluttony she did glance vaguely at a "ready-to-use" mustard plaster, though she realized that a plaster which could take effect on his system through his mop of hair would have to be fitted out with actual teeth.

Not many times in her life had Miss Amoy been out of bed as late as eleven o'clock, and certainly not out of doors, and when she closed the kitchen door behind her she was in a mood to jerk Nero's chain and slap him with the shingle with which she had been threatening him ever since he came.

Scarcely had she closed the kitchen door behind her than she shrieked aloud. It was not a far-reaching shriek, but it was full of despair. She had forgotten the spring lock, and how completely she had locked herself out of her own house only she knew, who had latched and barred every window below stairs.

What was she to do? Nothing short of a fire would excuse a woman in an unbelted wrapper for being upon the street, and even a fire would be thought better of for occurring at a more seemly hour.

It was much too cold to stay in the woodshed with Nero. She would rather freeze into a marble column than to wrap herself in the part of an old woolen comforter that she had given him for bedding. She thought of saying her prayers, but she had said them once that night, and distinctly remembered that she had prayed to be delivered from "battle, murder, and sudden death."

And still Nero howled. He could not have expected sympathy for whatever ailed him. He made his trouble too offensive for that, but attention he would have.

Very cautiously she tried to pry up the nearest window. It would not yield an inch, and the next was no better, although she had always had her doubts about the catch that held it down. As she went toward the third she heard steps approaching at a reckless speed. A man was coming, and as the moon shone fully on him she came near to another scream. It was a Mr. Pollard, a widower who she had always highly respected, but such a looking Mr. Pollard!

If she had seen more of men he would not have looked so strange to her, for the most orderly of men have moments in their lives when their hair is disordered and they are in a collarless, cuffless, vestless state, with their feet encased in slippers.

Had she been compelled to picture Mr. Pollard during his hours of repose, she would have imagined him as always conventional. She simply could not have thought of him without collar, tie, and shoes complete. It would have been almost beyond her to think of him without his hat.

She had not much time to be shocked over his appearance before she was hurried into dismay over the safety of his soul. He was talking to Nero as he came on the subject of dogs that bark at night, and the force of his language was remarkable.

"What ails you, you first cousin to a starving coyote, you accursed beast?" was among the questions he poured out upon the howling animal, and then, without waiting for Nero, he answered himself, and his answers were not flattering, hardly what might be called polite.

Miss Amoy had never before heard a man of social standing hotly cursing, but she was not shocked. She felt that Nero was being properly described. Time and time again she had wanted names for him, and now she had them. She could not repeat them, of course, but she could think of them, and that was something.

As soon as Mr. Pollard was inside the shed, Nero flew at him the full length of his chain, either intending to eat or intimidate him, but Mr. Pollard seemed anxious for trouble, and soon he and the dog were hot at it. Nero was handicaped by being chained to the wash bench, but his teeth were larger than Mr. Pollard's, who, on his side, was wearing slippers and carrying a cane, which Nero did not possess.

Mr. Pollard seemed to feel that he had just got to kick and pound Nero before he could go home and go to sleep, while Nero acted as if his troubles would all be forgotten if he could get a good, large bite out of Mr. Pollard.

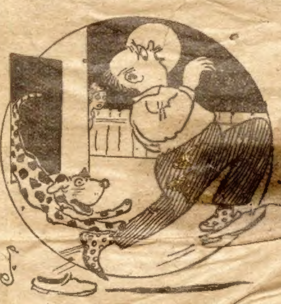
Suddenly Mr. Pollard came hurriedly limping from the shed and slammed the door behind him. Nero had once more broken loose and just as Mr. Pollard seized a stick of wood and faced about, he was through an open window and upon him.

Miss Amoy knew that she must think and think quickly. Nero would leave anything to eat, and she had food concealed in the shed for his breakfast. Just as Mr. Pollard had decided that he would probably be maimed for life, he saw an angel dressed in a wool wrapper, with its hair held up by two wire hairpins, flit past him, to return almost instantly with a plate of soggy pancakes. How a person's life was to be saved with cold pancakes seemed hard to guess, but the sight of the cooked food instantly diverted Nero from his plan of eating Mr. Pollard raw.

When the sound of his peaceful champing told that all of trouble, as far as he was concerned, was over, a deep embarrassment fell upon the man and woman.

Miss Amoy would have liked to apologize for Nero and withdraw, but there was no place to withdraw. Mr. Pollard was uneasily aware of having talked very forcibly to Nero; besides, it had been quite a number of years since he had been so near to a single woman without having his hair and teeth nicely brushed.

Miss Amoy he knew only as a lady in a black hat in church, attending strictly to the service. No one could see her thus and not set her down as a most worthy woman, but, somehow, this Miss Amoy in the woolen wrapper with her hair badly tumbled seemed a much more attractive person. Mr. Pollard lingered.



Nero had broken loose!

"I—beg your pardon," he halted. "I am afraid I was—a—little unpleasant about—your dog [illegible] smil[illegible], and the[illegible]ingly. [illegible]s. Better

A week before [illegible] would. Why been dreadfully [illegible] at his la[illegible] can to Nero. She would [illegible] shown it, and there the matter would have ended, but now it was different. A smile started for her lips, wavered, came farther, then suddenly burst over her nice, red mouth.

"Oh!" she cried, clasping her hands and looking [illegible] into his eyes, "it was just—well, perhaps not just—but almost what I have been wanting to say to him for days!"

After that it was all too easy. Mr. Pollard laughed, [illegible] loudly, for he, at least, was alive to what the neighbors might think, but he laughed. Then Miss Amoy explained about being locked out, and they planned how she was to be got back in again, and it was all very familiar and exciting.

She was so startled when she found how easily he broke the fastening [illegible] diningroom window that he had to [illegible] assure her by explaining how unusually strong he was in his hands, and then came the awful moment when he had to lift her up on the windowsill. It was so plain how dreadfully embarrassed she felt, that Mr. Pollard could not but realize what an alarming person he must appear.

After that, whenever they met, there was always a secret understanding between them.

How was one to meet a man who has lifted you into a window without blushing? How can a woman have a man ask her witty things in an undertone, such as "How is Nero today?" or, "Is Nero still with you?" and not feel that a dangerous intimacy has sprung up between you?

It was not to be done, and it was not. Miss Amoy became the second Mrs. Pollard, and, though perhaps she did not realize it, if it had not been for Nero she never would have been Mrs. Anybody.

* * *

No Answer Right.

"My wife likes to ask me what I'd do if she should die.

"Sometimes I tell her that, having had enough of matrimony, I should remain single. When I give her this answer she says that's just like a man. No matter how good and faithful his wife is, he never appreciates her. Again I will say that I would be so lonesome that there would be nothing left for me but to hunt up some other good woman to take her place. This makes her so mad that [illegible] pi[illegible]ng to scratch my eyes out [illegible] threate[illegible] won't do it. Th[illegible] I'll I promise I[illegible] ally I'll try still another[illegible]

"'My dear,' I will say low[illegible] you I should soon [illegible] a broken[illegible] grave, as the result [illegible] one scornfully [illegible]

"Then she looks at [illegible] it is men tell [illegible] says she wonders who [illegible] women. App[illegible] cruel, mocking lies can square myself ently the only way [illegible]ublesome subject is with her on this tr[illegible] good husband and to do my duty like a [illegible] die first."

* * *

The Fee Was Lost.

The age and dulln[illegible] of the miscel-laneous reading-matte[illegible] with which physicians stock the table[illegible] of their waiting-rooms have long bee[illegible] a subject of jest. Here is a story wh[illegible]ch shows that it mi[illegible] be to the do[illegible]'s own interest to supp[illegible] more enter[illegible] reading: [illegible] annual dinner of the R[illegible] medicine [illegible] one occa-sid[illegible] that only once had[illegible] a physician. [illegible] that single occasi[illegible] ndum artem. I st[illegible] tor in Har-[illegible] a book on [illegible] eved I suf-fer[illegible] July, and I had [illegible] son road [illegible] profuse [illegible] of [illegible] had to [illegible] a spi[illegible] I found an[illegible] disease. [illegible] read: 'T[illegible] oper[illegible] this dis-patie[illegible] once walked ease [illegible] out."

[illegible]d.

A certain [illegible] a very [illegible] and very bush[illegible] had dismissed [illegible] valet for the ni[illegible]. Shortly after[illegible], however, he was much annoyed [illegible] peals of laughter from below and [illegible] back to the man to explain. The va[illegible] answered that it was just a little jo[illegible], but his lordship would have none of it and demanded the details, angrily.

"Well," admitted the man, with reluctance, "it was really a little game we were having my lord."

"What game?"

"Well, my lord, [illegible] kind of guessing game."

"Don't be a fool, Waters, I rang [illegible] you in order to get an explanation. W[illegible] guessing game were you playing? Guessing what?"

"We blindfolded the cook, to tell [illegible] truth, my lord, and then one of us k[illegible] her, and she had to guess who it was, and the footman held the mop up, and she kissed it and then cried out, 'Oh, your lordship! How dare you!'"

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THE CROOKED MAN

Or, WOLFERT'S PROBLEM -:- By WILDER ANTHONY

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CHAPTER I.

ADAM WOLFERT looked up from a mass of newspaper clippings as his visitor entered the room.

"Sit down, Inspector," he said cordially. "You will find cigars there on the table."

Inspector Warren of the Central Office, a tall, clean-shaven man in his early thirties, accepted the invitation and selected a cigar. During the moment he required to light it, Wolfert laid aside his papers and reached a long arm for a much-blackened briar pipe, which he filled from a glass tobacco jar.

"Well?" he queried.

"You've already guessed my errand, I fancy," Inspector Warren rejoined "I've seen you display your uncanny faculty of reading other peoples' thoughts so often that I'm fairly used to it."

Wolfert chuckled in the noiseless manner peculiar to him, and regarded the other quizzically through a cloud of tobacco smoke.

"It does not take a mind reader to deduce that you are worried about something," he replied. It's the Van Tassel robbery, of course?"

Inspector Warren nodded.

"Ah!" Wolfert stared oddly into the bowl of his pipe for an instant. "I more than half expected that you would wish to consult me about that, and I've been preparing for you to some extent. I have just finished reading all that the papers have to say," nodding toward the heap of clippings at his elbow.

"Can you make anything out of it?" Inspector Warren asked eagerly. "I don't mind telling you in confidence that I am up a stump. At first glance the thing looks like an ordinary case of safe-cracking—I can almost name the men who turned the trick—but there's more behind it. No ordinary crook ever pped a job of that magnitude, and sn't a single decent clew to start n. I've been given entire charge of case, Wolfert, and I want your help. e case is worthy of your best efforts. s going to be mighty hard to prove o killed Stevens—and the reward is a one."

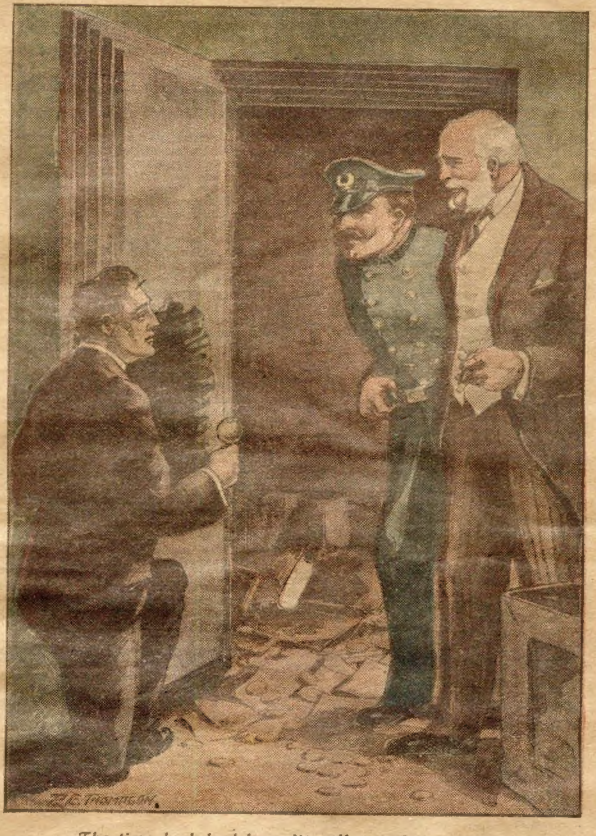
"I see," Wolfert commented dryly, "and you want me to help you earn it. Well, I'm willing, more willing than you suspect, perhaps. You had better begin at the beginning and tell me all the facts; I've read the papers, but I'd rather get your point of view at first hand. The case presents some very unusual features."

"It does, indeed," Warren agreed heartily, "and I believe we shall have our hands full solving it. Briefly, the facts are these: John Howard Stevens was, as you know, cashier of the Van Tassel Trust Company. Last Tuesday evening, about seven-thirty o'clock, he entered the bank and sat down at his desk to straighten up some papers, which were to be used in a big financial deal on the following day. The bank's private watchman—a fellow named Scully, who has been in his present position for eleven years—let him in and saw him seat himself at his desk. Afterwards he (Scully) went down into the basement to turn off a light which he had left burning there.

"He had done this and was on his way airs again, when he was startled slight sound behind him. Before he uld turn or draw his gun from his ocket, he was seized by two masked men, and gagged, and locked up in a onvenient coat closet. He had neither ime nor opportunity to make an outcry, t he is a powerful man, and he put as good a fight as he was able before e was thrown into the closet, where he mained the rest of the night.

"Next morning, when the head clerk, se business it was, arrived to open bank, he found Cashier Stevens lying a corner stone dead—he had been ot through the brain—and Scully half-ffocated in the closet. The vault, a ge affair of the very latest pattern, quipped with a time lock, was wide pen and a hasty examination of its helves showed that two hundred and n thousand dollars in currency was issing. Nearly twice this amount in ld and silver coin was lying in plain ght; but it had not been touched.

"When I got to the bank, which was thin half an hour after the crime s discovered, you may be sure that st no time in getting to work. I over the inside of that building a pin couldn't have escaped me, I found nothing. Except for the fact the thieves entered through a rear window and for the watchman's story, I haven't a single real clew. We know that there were at least two men in the job, which, by the way, was expert work; but that's all. They didn't leave a trace behind them."



The time lock had been literally cut from its bed.

Inspector Warren paused and puffed rapidly at his cigar, while Wolfert stared absently at the wall. For several moments neither man spoke; then the detective roused himself and looked up.

"How was the vault opened?" he asked.

"Electric drill. They screwed an extension into a light socket and cut the lock clean out of the door—it was armor plate at that; but it crumbled like putty under the current. All the alarm wires, even those connecting with the telephone and telegraph instruments, were cut. It was a mighty classy bit of work, all right, whoever did it."

"This watchman—are you sure he is trustworthy?"

"Yes, reasonably so. I spent the better part of an afternoon questioning him, and I couldn't shake his story. I think it is safe to assume that he knows no more than he says."

Wolfert smiled grimly. He was familiar with the methods pursued by the regular police in examining a half-suspected person, and he did not envy Scully his experience.

"How about Stevens?" he asked quietly.

"His record is clean," replied the Inspector, "and the fact that he was killed ought to prove that he was not in it. My theory is that he heard the scuffle when they captured Scully, stepped out of his room to investigate, and they killed him. The position of his body indicated this, and there was a pen still clutched in his fingers as though he had just left his desk.

"The thing that gets me, Wolfert, is how they drilled that vault without being seen. It must have taken hours to do a job like that, and the door is in plain sight from the street. The bank was lighted all night as usual, but the patrolman on the beat didn't see or hear a thing suspicious, although he passed the building and looked into it half a dozen times. The thing doesn't seem possible, somehow."

Wolfert's next question seemed a little irrelevant.

"Did it ever strike you," he asked, "that there have been a number of very remarkable crimes lately?"

"I should say so," answered Warren, with a rueful grin. "We fellows at the office have been getting a grilling from the press for the past six months on account of them. There have been a dozen big robberies and half as many murders here in New York, which have never been wholly explained. This Van Tassel business is the biggest of the whole lot."

"He's a clever man," Wolfert remarked, "a mighty clever man! He might have succeeded in almost any walk of life; but he chose crime. He's a foeman worthy of the best we can bring against him, Warren."

"He? Who?" Inspector Warren looked up in surprise.

"You don't mean to tell me that you have not guessed it? Hasn't the similarity of many of these crimes puzzled you? All these big affairs—this Van Tassel robbery, the Maltby diamonds, that Henderson murder mystery, and fifty others in different parts of the country have been planned by him. I've tried my best to find out who he is, but I've always failed. Just recently I learned from a member of that dynamite gang we caught last month that his followers call him 'the Crooked Man'—he's a hunchback, they say—and that is all I actually know about him. The rest is merely a matter of adding two and two together.

"Sitting in an office somewhere, even as we sit here at this moment, he makes his plans and issues his orders like a general safely ensconced behind his army; nothing prevents his purpose; no one has ever discovered who he really is. Like a general, too, he has his hundreds of loyal adherents; followers so true that some of them have faced the gallows without divulging his existence. I tell you, Inspector, we are working against the greatest criminal the world has ever seen. He's a man in a million!"

Inspector Warren appeared a trifle incredulous. His companion's eloquent description of the Crooked Man did not impress him as much as it might have done.

"You mean that all these crimes have been planned by one man?" he hazarded.

"Exactly. The master villain is back of them all, although he probably has no actual part in them. In fact, even though we knew his identity, it would be impossible at this stage to convict him of his crimes. Still, I can see signs of his handiwork everywhere. He is the cleverest and most audacious scoundrel I've ever dealt with. Take this Van Tassel bank affair, for instance. Just think of it! A bank—one of the largest in the greatest city in the country—robbed of two hundred thousand dollars, and its cashier murdered at an hour when the great outside was thronged with people. The mere audacity of the thing spells the work of no ordinary man!"

"By George!" Inspector Warren exclaimed, getting to his feet nervously, "you may be right after all, Wolfert. In some way the thing resembles the Voorhes jewel robbery of two months ago, and that——" He broke off aghast, as though for the first time becoming aware of the enormity of the thing. "Good heavens!" he ejaculated, a moment later, "it means that crime has been organized, that——"

"Exactly," Wolfert interrupted. "I thought you'd see it presently. For myself, I first discovered indications of this 'King of Crime' nearly two years ago. Since then I have been constantly on the lookout for an opportunity to snare him. But he has been too clever. Never a mistake. Never a slip. During all these months he has operated in perfect security; I've never been able to catch him. You caught the actual perpetrator of the Voorhes burglary; but he is only a tool. The real thief, the arch-villain himself, is still at large, and laughing at our puny efforts to capture him."

Inspector Warren lighted a fresh cigar and sat down again.

"You may be right," he remarked quietly. "In fact, now that you have given me a hint, I think that you are right. I am beginning to see that all these big crimes could not have been the work of an ordinary gang of burglars, as we at first supposed. They've been too well planned and executed. Some man of brains and education is responsible for them. Haven't you the least idea who this fellow is?"

"Not the slightest. He seldom runs risks himself; but plans these coups for the others. I believe, however, that he is located here in New York. Most of his crimes are committed here, and a city like this is the most logical place for him to hide. We must go carefully, Warren; it won't do to warn him that we so much as suspect his existence."

"Of course not. We'll work on the strict Q. T. until we can get evidence enough to convict him. How do you expect to reach him, Wolfert?"

"I don't know. Hiding like a great spider in his web, never stirring from his place of safety, he is a mighty hard man to hunt. Some day, however, he'll make a slip, a little insignificant slip, and by that slip I shall catch him. I've waited two years to get a chance at him; it's my greatest ambition. Once the chance comes, I shall not fail to grasp it. This Van Tassel case may be it. Who knows? Come, Inspector, let us go to the bank! You have already examined it, but two heads are always better than one, and, unless I am much mistaken, we shall need all our wits if we are to circumvent this fellow."

CHAPTER II.

IT WAS some time after regular banking hours, and the Van Tassel Trust Company was practically deserted when the two detectives entered the huge granite building. A few clerks, busy over their ledgers, looked up curiously as the visitors passed; otherwise there was no one in sight. Inspector Warren led the way straight to the private office, where they found President Whitney, an elderly gentleman in frock coat and side whiskers, who shook Wolfert's hand warmly.

"I'm glad you have come, Mr. Wolfert," he declared. "This is a terrible business. The money loss in itself is bad enough, although it will not cripple us; but poor Stevens' death is far worse. We are all exceedingly anxious to give his murderers what they deserve—expense is of absolutely no consequence."

Making an appropriate reply, Wolfert expressed his desire to go over the bank and examine the scene of the crime; and Mr. Whitney volunteered to act as guide. Five minutes later the three men were standing in front of the rifled vault.

It was a massive affair, built entirely of chilled steel and reinforced concrete, with doors and locks of the latest and most approved pattern. Since the robbery it had not been used, the contents having been removed to a place of safety until such time as the broken lock could be repaired. The heavy doors swung wide open, a gaping hole in their center showing how the time lock had been literally cut out of its bed. Wolfert examined this carefully.

"You were right," he remarked, turning to Inspector Warren at the end of a few minutes, "it is an expert job. The man who opened these doors knew his business from A to Z. Funny how easy it is for a really first-class cracksman to tap one of these so-called 'burglar-proof' safes. All he needs is the opportunity to work without hindrance."

The Inspector nodded. "Yes," he said, "man can not invent anything that man can not break. It's a law of nature, I suppose."

"Where was Mr. Stevens' body picked up?" Wolfert asked, leaving the vault after a brief examination, as though satisfied that he could discover nothing of importance there.

"Over here near the doorway of the directors' room," answered Mr. Whitney, leading the way to the spot he mentioned. "The poor fellow evidently caught the thieves red-handed; but they shot him before he could give the alarm."

Wolfert dropped on one knee near the place where the body had lain and peered along the passageway which extended from the vault to the front of the building.

"Humph!" he muttered. "They could see him coming the moment he stepped out of his own room. This passage gives an unobstructed view of the entire bank. It's curious that some passer-by did not see them at work on the vault and turn in an alarm, if, as I suppose, the building was lighted as usual."

"It was, of course," said Mr. Whitney, "although all the wires except those carrying the light current were cut. The thieves must have had considerable knowledge of the building, for they had no trouble in locating the wires and disabling our alarm system—a very elaborate one, by the way. They seem to have been prepared for everything."

"Quite so. The job had been very cleverly planned from beginning to end. Ah! What have we here?"

Dropping flat on his stomach, Wolfert scrutinized a minute hole in the cement between the tiles of the floor. Presently he sat up and, pursing his lips in the manner of one who thinks intently, glanced sidewise at the vault. For a moment he remained thus; then, smiling faintly, he sprang to his feet.

"Let us go into the basement," he said crisply. "There is nothing more to do here for the present."

Three heavy iron bars on a small window had been cut through and wrenched from their places, making an aperture large enough to admit the body of a man. Wolfert looked at the severed ends of the bars very carefully; then he turned to Mr. Whitney.

"Is there any one in the bank's employ," he asked, "who is interested in photography?"

At this question both Mr. Whitney and Inspector Warren looked up in surprise.

"Why, no," answered the former. "That is, not now. Mr. Stevens was rather a crank on the subject, I believe."

"Ah!" There was a curious gleam in the detective's pale eyes as he followed the banker across the basement to where a small trapdoor was set into the wall.

"This is where the alarm wires leave the building," the latter explained briefly.

Wolfert carefully explored the depths of the box-like opening. Plunging his hand between the severed ends of a number of small copper wires, he drew forth a solid rubber glove, such as is in general use among linemen. For a moment or two he turned this over and over in his hands; then he folded it and put it in his pocket.

"Now," he said, "I should like to see your watchman—Scully."

An hour later, after Scully had repeated his story—substantially the same as that already related—to Wolfert, the two detectives left the bank and swung off up the street.

"Well," the Inspector asked, "what do you think of it? Have you discovered anything?"

"Enough for a start," was the answer, "although it's too soon to be sure. It's quite obvious, however, that the vault was cracked by skilled crooks; there are not many men in the country who could have done such neat work. If I were you, I should hunt up Kelly, Sinclair, and Roche. One of these three, perhaps all of them, had a hand in it."

"Just what I thought, and I have already spread the dragnet; but, somehow, we can't locate the men. Kelly is in jail at Pittsburgh—that lets him out—and the others have disappeared completely. If we could get them we might sweat a confession out of them as to the identity of their mysterious chief."

"You might," Wolfert vouchsafed dryly, "but I doubt it. It's even money that they don't know his name themselves; he's too clever to put himself in their power. But whatever you do, Inspector, don't let any one know that we're after him. Half our strength lies in the fact that he thinks himself so secure. He'll discover what we are doing soon enough, as it is."

As the two were about to separate, Wolfert took his companion by the arm.

"I'll give you one little pointer, Warren," he said confidentially, "and I hope you will make the most of it. The thieves, whoever they were, entered the bank through a door. That broken window was merely a blind; they left it that way to fool us. Those bars were sawed from the inside."

Inspector Warren looked up in astonishment, but before he could voice the question that was trembling on his lips, the detective pivoted on his heel and hurried away into the crowd. A sound, which sounded to the perplexed inspector very much like a chuckle of amusement, drifted back over his shoulder.

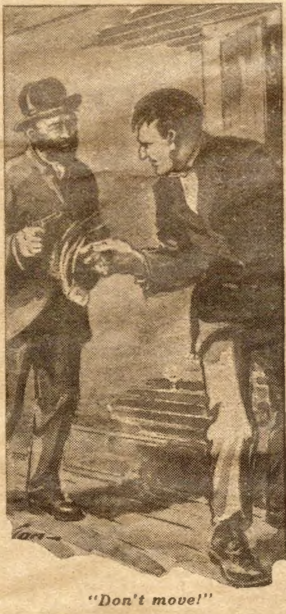
Wolfert hastened to his own office, where he rang up several persons over the telephone. Next he pressed a button on his desk and sent for one of his operatives.

"Boyd," he said, when the man stood before him, "I want you to visit every manufacturer and painter of theatrical scenery in the city. Find out whether any of them have painted an imitation of a safe or vault front within the past few months. If they have not, ask if any one of their expert workmen has been discharged or has left his place recently. Report to me here as soon as you get this information."

"Very well, sir," replied Boyd, and quietly withdrew.

Going across the room to a bookcase, Wolfert took down a bulky letter file from which he removed a mass of typewritten papers. For an hour he pored over these; then, flinging them from him, he filled and lighted his pipe and sank into a deep chair, where he smoked thoughtfully until very late in the evening. At last, after he had filled and emptied his pipe half a dozen times, he grinned inscrutably and got to his feet.

"It's the only way," he soliloquized, "the only way to do it. I must have proof. The man is dead, but——"



"Don't move!"

Leaving his sentence unfinished, he was on the point of leaving the room, when the telephone bell rang shrilly. Wolfert sat down again and placed the receiver to his ear.

"Hello," he said.

"That you, Mr. Wolfert?" came the inquiry. It was Inspector Warren talking.

Wolfert answered in the affirmative, and the Inspector went on:

"I called up to tell you that Roche has been captured. Found him hiding down on the East Side. He won't talk, of course, but I guess he's our man. We found a full kit of tools in his lodgings."

If the tone of his voice indicated anything, Inspector Warren was much elated at the capture. Wolfert, after a few moments' low-toned conversation, hung up the receiver and put on his hat.

"So it was Roche, eh!" he mused, as he went down the stairs. "The police are good at finding a man they know, and they know how to make 'em talk; but I don't think that Dutchman will confess. It's even doubtful if he knows; but he'll play for time, anyhow. I'm glad they've got him, though; it will help my little scheme immensely."

CHAPTER III.

FOR the next three or four days Wolfert hardly took the time to eat or sleep. Most of his time was spent in the file rooms of several of the daily newspapers, or in going over masses of written reports, which his operatives handed to him. He said little, smoked almost constantly, and bore at all times the worried, harassed look of a man who is searching for something he can not find.

Dan Roche, the ex-convict and expert safe-cracker, securely locked up in a cell at the Tombs, maintained an attitude of calm taciturnity, despite the efforts—and they were by no means feeble—of the police to make him talk. Roche was an old hand, and he knew instinctively that his jailers lacked the evidence necessary to convict him.

Boyd, after spending two days in fruitless endeavor, discovered a painter who confessed to having reproduced a false vault front from a photograph brought him by an unknown man, who said that he wanted the screen for use in some private theatricals. The painter gave a fairly good description of the fellow; a description which closely fitted a man named Connelly, whom the police had long suspected of being an agent for several well-known crooks. Wolfert smiled inscrutably after his interview with the painter, and immediately set to work on the clew thus given him.

It was on the evening of the fourth day after Inspector Warren's visit, when the detective, tired and foot-sore as he entered his rooms, found a small white envelope lying on the floor. It had evidently been pushed beneath the door during his absence, and he opened it curiously. The note within, which was typewritten, ran as follows:

"Speaking from a purely impersonal standpoint, I would advise you to cease meddling with things which do not concern you. You have seriously inconvenienced me several times, and I am not a patient man. Stop your meddling before it is too late!"

The note was undated and unsigned, but Wolfert had no trouble in guessing its author. He chuckled grimly.

"I've touched him," he muttered. "There's a joint in his armor somewhere and I've reached it. I wish I knew when and how."

Shortly after dusk the next evening a man, who in appearance bore all the earmarks of a cheap gambler or racetrack "tout," sauntered slowly down a narrow street in the toughest quarter of New York. Faded brown derby cocked at a rakish angle on one side of his bullet head, hands in the pockets of a pair of dove-colored trousers much soiled and frayed at the bottoms, and smoking a cheap cigar which hung from the corner of his pendulous lower lip until its glowing end came perilously near a greasy black beard, the man glanced about him keenly from a pair of watery blue eyes. At the corner opposite a large, brilliantly lighted saloon he paused for an instant as though uncertain of his way; then, with a quick shrug of his padded shoulders, he pushed through the swinging doors and went inside.

Business in the place was at full blast. A line of rough-looking, loud-talking men stood along the bar, engaged in drinking the doubtful liquor which was shoved toward them by three white-aproned bartenders, while a dozen others sat around small, marble-topped tables at the rear of the room, smoking and sipping beer from tall, thick glasses. To one of these tables, which happened to be unoccupied, the newcomer made his way and sat down.

Ordering a beer from the sallow, crafty-eyed waiter, who instantly appeared at his elbow, he leaned back against the wall and filled a short-stemmed pipe. At his entrance one or two habitues of the place had glanced at him curiously, but, satisfied evidently that the stranger was harmless and presented no opportunity for plucking, they returned to their beer. In five minutes the stranger was forgotten by all save one man.

This man, a big, florid-faced fellow, prosperous looking in a coarse, brutish way, eyed the newcomer narrowly for a few moments. Finally he leaned forward and addressed a whispered remark to his companion, an abnormally thin individual who squinted horribly. Glancing furtively over his shoulder, the other said something in reply, and a little later the big man got up and crossed the room. Arriving at the stranger's table, he sat down without waiting for an invitation.

"Hello, Kel," he greeted, in the hoarse tones of a chronic whisky drinker.

For an instant an inscrutable look flashed into the watery blue eyes, then the stranger's face resumed its wooden expression. "Hello," he growled.

Not in the least abashed at this cool reception, the big man grinned expansively. "Thought you was out of town," he observed, crooking a fat forefinger toward the watchful waiter, and, as that worthy responded, "What'll you have?"

The stranger called for another beer, and until the waiter returned with it and the big man's whisky, the two were silent. When he had gone, however, the big man leaned forward confidentially.

"I'm glad to see you, Kel," he declared thickly. "Only the other day I was thinkin' about you and wishin' you was in town. Hear about Roche?"

"Nope. Pinched, I s'pose?"

"Yes. The bulls lagged him for that Van Tassel job. He'll come through all right—the Chief's in it."

The stranger raised his eyebrows inquiringly. "How did it happen?" he asked. "I've been away, and——"

"Sure, I know," the other interrupted, "but this ain't the place to talk. We're all friends here, of course, but the bulls are mighty fly these day Chief's not takin' any chance be careful than sorry, is his mott not come over to the garage? W dope it out all safe and sound over there."

The stranger drank the remainder of his beer at a gulp. "All right," he answered, "I'm ripe for anything that'll put a few stones in my kick."

"Thought you'd be," said the big man, rising, "an' I've got something on ice for you."

At this remark the stranger's watery eyes hardened momentarily; but he followed his companion out of the saloon without comment. Crossing the street, they disappeared in the mouth of a narrow alley. After many devious turnings the big man halted in front of a small door, where he knocked guardedly twice. There was a short wait, and then the door swung inward and the two men entered.

Walking down a dimly illuminated passageway, they finally turned into a little room which contained a table and two chairs. The big man unlocked a small cupboard from which he took a bottle and glasses; pulling a chair up to the table, he waved his companion to a seat on the other side. As he did so he made a peculiar motion with his right hand. For a second the stranger eyed him calmly, then he made a similar sign with the left hand.

The big man smiled. "Mere form, of course," he remarked, "but it don't do to take no chances these days. I'm glad you're back, Kelly—mighty glad! We need you. How did you fly the coop?"

The stranger shrugged his shoulders. "You've got me," he said. "I don't place you, although I've seen you somewheres. You——"

"Oh, that's all right," the other interrupted hoarsely, with what was intended to be a jovial laugh. "Two years is a long stretch, an' I've changed some since you saw me. My name's Connelly—Sam Connelly. I met you at Bandy Jim's before you got scragged."

"Oh, yes!" the stranger's face lost its doubtful expression. "I remember you now. What's the lay?"

"I ain't dead certain yet, but the Chief's got another plant in mind. Roche would have been in it if he hadn't been nipped. That don't make any difference, though, now you're back. We thought you was in Pittsburgh."

"I was until last night. Haven't you seen the papers lately?"

"Nope; but it don't matter. You're here—that's the main thing. They'll be on the lookout for you, so you'd bet stop here until I can frame up so thing with the Chief. It'll be safer. tell Trench to take care of you."

"That'll be all right. I'll lay low un the time comes. How did they la Roche?"

"I don't know. He was hidin' over Mag's when the bulls found him. I that new fly cop probably,—d—n him. One of these days he'll get his if he don't leave us alone. We had 'em all guessin' but him. It was the old dodge. Portable front for Roche to work behind and all that. Lookin' in through the window, a man would never know but what he was lookin' at the vault itself instead of a painted canvas screen. It's a smooth trick, if you ask me."

"Yes," Kelly commented, with a chuckle, "the Crooked Man's got some good ones up his sleeve. It's a good job they put away that highbrow—he got the picture, I s'pose?"

"Yes, an' he knew too much for safety. That's why he got counted out. It was the Chief's idea to make it look like he just happened in while the box was bein' cracked."

Connelly suddenly rose to his feet.

"I must beat it pretty quick," he announced, "and I want to talk to Trench. He's a new man, so I'll have to fix things for you. I'll come back again before I leave."

"You might send him out for a bite grub," Kelly suggested. "It's bee long while since I had a feed."

Connelly nodded and left the roo Left alone, Kelly filled and lighted his pipe and smoked thoughtfully for a few moments. At length he tiptoed to the door and looked carefully along the passage in the direction Connelly had take For a space he stood thus, listening intently, before he returned to the tabl again. Back within the circle of lam light he pulled an ugly-looking maga pistol from his hip-pocket, made that it was loaded and cocked, and it beside him on the chair. Then leaned back and began to smoke onc more.

When Connelly returned a few minutes later his guest was apparently dozing. Giving vent to a throaty chuckle, th big man reached for the bottle and glass. He was in the act of pourin himself a generous drink, when he fro suddenly into immobility.

"Don't move," admonished a qu voice, which, although it came fr Kelly's lips, seemed wholly different timbre from the convict's usual t "I've got a few words to say to you.

Connelly wet his lips nervously. red cheeks had turned to a dirty g and the hands which held the bottle glass shook slightly. In the menace of

(Continued on page sixteen.)

SNARES OF FATE

Or, TANGLED THREADS - By EMMA HOWARD WIGHT

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CHAPTER IX.

"YOU HAVE YOUR DESIRE."

THERE was an expansive smile on Uncle Ned's face as he crossed the street to the church. His young master was to preach his first sermon in the church that morning. In honor of the occasion Uncle Ned had donned his best clothes, a cherished and carefully preserved clerical suit given him twenty-five years ago by his old master.

He entered the auditorium of the church, giving an admiring glance at the chancel which was banked with flowers.

"Dat sholy do look pooty," murmured Uncle Ned. "And it am all done fo' to welcome my young massa."

He passed through the church and went up to the tower. The bell pealed out jubilantly, it seemed to the old darky.

"Do yo' best, ole bell," he murmured. "Dis am a great 'casion, dis am."

Alone in his room, the newly ordained minister listened to the bell with a strange, shrinking look, almost like dread, on his face. In the room below, Mrs. Stanley listened to the bell with the light of a great joy on her pale, worn face She was dressed to be carried over to the church.

"The day for which I have prayed and longed, Mary, has come at last," she said to her daughter.

"You are happy, mother?" queried Mary, as she stood beside her mother's couch, looking pale and grave.

"Happier than I have words to tell, you, dear," replied Mrs. Stanley.

Mary suppressed a sigh as she bent and kissed her mother's white cheek. She was wondering if she had purchased this happiness for her mother too dearly. There were times she had a great misgiving as to whether she had been justified, no matter with what object, in bringing to bear upon her brother the pressure which had induced him not to withdraw from the ministry. His words, "I am not fit," and the manner in which he had spoken them, haunted her. She could not forget them.

He had only arrived the night previous, and she had had little opportunity to observe him. He appeared silent and rather grave, except when his mother was present, and then he aroused himself with an effort and threw off his gravity and abstraction.

When Dr. Wiley, who, with the assistance of Uncle Ned, was to carry Mrs. Stanley over to the church, arrived, Mary went upstairs and knocked on the door of her brother's room. He opened the door after a moment, looking very handsome and very young in his clerical clothes.

"May I come in, Harmer?" asked Mary.

"Certainly." He held the door open so that she could enter.

"Harmer," she said, as they stood facing each other in the bright, cozy room she had arranged with such loving care, "I want to tell you how earnestly, with all my heart, with all my soul, I wish you peace and happiness in the new life which begins for you today."

He flashed a strange look upon her; then his eyes fell and a faint smile passed over his lips.

"Thank you," he murmured.

She stood looking at him, a hurt expression in her eyes. He had replied as he would have replied to a mere acquaintance, formally, conventionally. She moved nearer to him appealingly.

"Harmer, what has come between you and me?" she asked almost piteously. "What have I done that causes you to treat me like this?"

"What have you done?" he cried passionately, accusingly. She looked at him wondering, startled, and he immediately controlled himself. "Do you not think it is about time for us to be going over to the church?" he asked.

She turned from him silently and moved toward the door. There she stopped and looked back at him.

"I thought that this day would be the happiest day of my life," she said unsteadily, "but I am far from being happy."

"You have your desire," he reminded her, as he turned to take up his soft clerical hat from a chair.

"Mary!" Dr. Wiley was calling her from the hall below.

She went down to him.

"Uncle Ned and I are going to carry Mrs. Stanley over to the church," he said.

Mary went out upon the porch. Dr. Wiley lingered to shake hands with the young minister who had followed Mary, down the stairs.

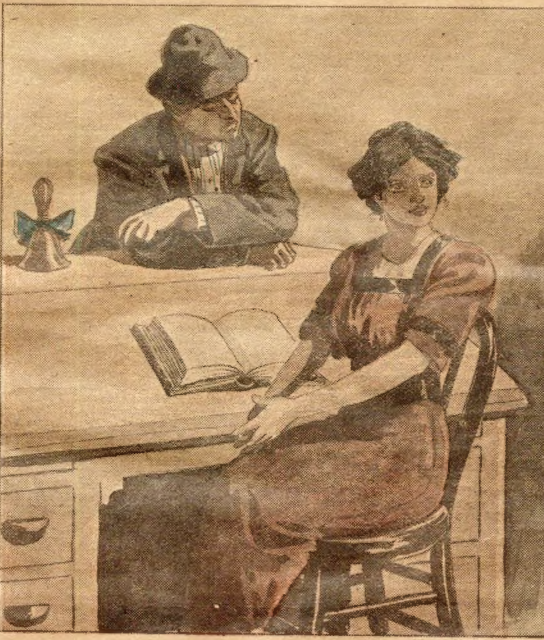
Mrs. Stanley, a smile on her lips and a touch of hectic color on her wan cheek, reclined in an invalid chair on the porch with Uncle Ned standing beside her.

"De mistis am lookin' mighty spry dis mo'nin', ain't she, Miss Mary?" said Uncle Ned.

"Yes, indeed, Uncle Ned," Mary replied, with a smile, as, with a caressing touch, she arranged the ribbon of her mother's bonnet.

Dr. Wiley and Harmer came out. The young minister went up to his mother and kissed her.

"God bless you, dear!" she murmured, looking up at him with proud, loving eyes.



"No, I ain't goin' to kill you."

"Well, are you ready now?" asked Dr. Wiley, in his brisk, cheery way. At the same time, he gave a keen glance at Mrs. Stanley's flushed cheeks and laid his fingers for an instant on her pulse. For a moment he hesitated, appeared undecided, looking a little grave. Then he turned to Uncle Ned. "Come," he said. As they gently lifted Mrs. Stanley, he said to her, "You must keep yourself as quiet as possible. Don't get excited."

Mary and Harmer stood watching as Dr. Wiley and Uncle Ned bore their mother carefully across the street to the church. The latter was thinking:

"Poor mother! I must try to do the best I can for her sake. She must never know the truth, that I am utterly unfit to be a minister of the Gospel. I must try to keep from her that my heart is not in the work, that I loathe it."

He sighed and turned to his sister. "Are you going over now?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, and silently they crossed the street.

The church was crowded. As the young minister arose to preach, he glanced over the sea of faces until his eyes rested upon the face of his mother. She sat in a pew near the chancel, propped up by a pillow. Mary was seated beside her. Dr. Wiley sat in the pew back of her. Upon her pale, uplifted face there was a look of radiant joy and tender pride.

The young minister was very good to look at, with his slim, erect figure and handsome, patrician face. The more observant in the congregation were vaguely conscious of the absence of spirituality in the handsome face. A physiognomist might have read in it, despite its look of refinement and high breeding, self-indulgence, vicious tendencies, slumbering passions, gross appetites.

There could be no question, however, of the young minister's ability. He preached a brilliant sermon. But there were those in the congregation, and Mary Stanley was one of them, who found something lacking. Mary alone fathomed the reason. The sermon was superficial, there was no sincerity to make it convincing. It came entirely from the brain, no part of it from the heart. From an intellectual standpoint it was masterly, but the spiritual element was entirely lacking. And Mary, for the first time, understood something of what her brother had meant when he said, "I am not fit to be a minister." She was far from grasping the full meaning of those words, but she knew that Harmer Stanley's heart was not in his work, that the sacred duties he must perform would simply be perfunctory.

His eloquence, his fluency of language, his brilliancy ceased to appeal to her, afforded her no pleasure, awoke within her no pride. She listened in vain for one ring of true feeling, one touch of sincerity in the perfectly modulated voice. She breathed a half-sigh of relief when the sermon came to an end, only to be more painfully jarred when the young minister knelt and offered up a prayer. As she slipped to her knees, Mary glanced at her mother. Mrs. Stanley's head rested heavily against the pillow and her eyes were closed. Mary thought at first that she had fallen asleep, but a second glance at the pallor and strange stillness of her mother's face sent a pang of fear through her heart.

She arose and bent over her mother. Dr. Wiley left his pew and came quickly to her side.

"I am afraid mother has fainted," Mary said to him in a low voice.

Dr. Wiley did not reply.

When the young minister arose from his knees and turned again to the congregation, he saw that the places occupied by his mother, sister, and Dr. Wiley were vacant. As he gave out the hymn, Dr. Wiley came into the church and approached the chancel.

"Your mother is very ill," he said. "Come!"

They walked down the aisle together with the compassionate eyes of the congregation upon the young minister. As they passed out of the church, Harmer stopped and turned to Dr. Wiley.

"Is my mother very ill?" he asked.

"No," he replied. "She has gone where there is no illness, no suffering, where the weary are at rest."

"Dead?" whispered the young minister, with pale lips.

Dr. Wiley sadly inclined his head.

"Yes."

Mary was kneeling beside the dead body of her mother when Harmer came into the room. He came and stood beside her, looking down silently upon the pale, still face. After a moment Mary lifted her sorrow-stricken eyes to his face.

"Thank God, she died happy!" she said.

The eyes of the brother and sister met in a long glance. The curious, shrinking look stole over his face which Mary had seen there once before. And a swift presentiment thrilled through her that a day would come which she would be glad that her mother had not lived to see.

CHAPTER X.

THE THREAT.

A WEEK from the day of his arrest, John Steele was tried for murder. The trial consumed two days; it ended, as it was generally believed it would end, in the conviction of the prisoner. John Steele was found guilty of murder in the first degree and sentenced to be hanged.

David Steele was seated beside his brother, in the place he had occupied during the entire time of the trial, when the verdict was rendered. John Steele betrayed absolutely no emotion, he was stolidly unmoved. His face changed a little, however, as he gave a glance at the white anguished face of his young brother.

He leaned toward him and whispered: "Brace up, boy! Don't let 'em think you're a coward."

A pitiful smile quivered over David's lips.

There were many in the courtroom who pitied the young brother of the condemned man. Despite his efforts at self-control, he could not hide his agony when the sentence of death was pronounced upon his brother. Kathryn Ward, who had attended the trial with her father, observed the young mountaineer attentively. He possessed a peculiar interest for her.

Helen Rhodes was not present in the courtroom at any time during the trial. This was something of a disappointment to Kathryn. She was curious to see the country school-teacher with whom the rough mountaineer was so desperately infatuated and whom Henry Vincent had declared to be so very beautiful. She knew that the commonwealth attorney had taken every precaution to prevent its becoming known that Helen Rhodes had divulged the hiding-place of John Steele for the sake of the reward. Kathryn was also aware of the fact that Vincent was greatily concerned for the safety of the school-teacher. This was quite apparent to Kathryn when he requested her to keep secret her knowledge in regard to Steele's arrest.

"I will say nothing about it, of course, since you make a point of it," Kathryn had replied. "What is it you fear for the young woman?" she asked. "Do these mountaineers assassinate women as well as men?"

Vincent drew his breath sharply, suppressing a shudder.

"God knows!" he murmured passionately.

He started to his feet and began walking up and down the room in undisguised perturbation.

"Young Steele's eyes glared with rage and hate when he spoke of the person who betrayed his brother," Vincent continued. "But he did not know it was a woman."

"That might make a difference," suggested Kathryn.

"Perhaps so." Vincent resumed his seat. "But I doubt his discrimination. I am afraid his hate and desire for revenge would not be any the less if directed against a woman. They say that he is devotedly attached to his brother. I am having him closely watched, in case he finds out who is responsible for the capture of his brother and attempts to do harm to Miss Rhodes."

"Since John Steele is so madly in love with the girl, do you think he would want any harm to come to her?" asked Kathryn.

"I hadn't looked at the matter from that standpoint," Vincent replied. He paused a moment and then added, "It is possible, for you know there is no love 'like love to hatred turned.' At least, that is what the poet says."

"There is some truth in it, I fancy," Kathryn observed thoughtfully.

It was Vincent's fear of the young mountaineer's doing harm to Helen Rhodes that aroused Kathyrn's interest in him and caused her to study him at times with close attention. She watched him narrowly when sentence of death was being pronounced upon his brother. But there was more of cold calculation in her eyes than pity or morbid curiosity. He interested her far more than the principal figure in the tragic drama, the man who, in a month's time, was "to be hanged by the neck" until he was dead.

The prisoner was taken away and the tensity in the courtroom relaxed. The prisoner's counsel went and spoke in a low voice to David Steele. But the latter gave him scant attention, his strained gaze was fixed upon the door through which the prisoner, with head erect and defiant bearing, had passed a few minutes before. The lawyer turned away with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

David, his head bowed on his breast, moved mechanically toward the door.

"He looks more like he was going to be hanged than his brother does," a man standing near Kathryn remarked.

That afternoon, as Helen Rhodes was alone in the schoolhouse, after the dismissal of the children, the doorway was suddenly darkened by the form of a man. She glanced up a little eagerly, a pink flush creeping into her creamy cheeks. But the flush faded and she paled a little when she saw that her visitor was David Steele.

She arose to her feet, looking at him. She felt instinctively that he knew she was responsible for the capture of his brother. As he moved toward her, the look in his eyes sent a shiver of fear through her. He stopped in front of the desk. Helen had recovered herself, and she looked at him steadily, betraying nothing of the fear that possessed her. She had not heard the result of the trial, but from the haggard pallor of the young mountaineer's face, she concluded that John Steele had been found guilty and condemned to die on the gallows.

There was a tense silence for a moment, as they stood facing each other. Had he come there to kill her? Helen was asking herself. David appeared instinctively to guess her thoughts.

"No, I ain't goin' to kill you," he said. An involuntary sigh of relief left Helen's lips. "T'ain't because I didn't want to kill you," David continued, "as soon as I knowed what you'd gone and done. But John said no, that you war a woman. John knowed when the detectives come to the cave that you'd told whar he war hidin'! It war foolish of John fo' to tell you, but you've done bewitched him."

"I certainly had no desire to bewitch him," declared Helen.

David continued unheedingly:

"I always had a feelin' like you'd bring trouble to John. Well, you've done it; you've sent him to the gallows. They never would 'a' got him but fo' you. You gave him away to git the reward, and I am goin' to pay you back fo' it some day. John war all I had in the world, and he war always mighty good to me. I ain't got nothin' to live fo' now, 'ceptin' one thing—to git even with you."

"What do you intend doing?" asked Helen.

"I don't know yit," he replied, his eyes bent darkly upon her. "I don't know how or when, but it'll be some day. I can wait, wait years, if it has to be, but I'll never give up. Sooner or later, I am goin' to make you suffer fo' what you done to John. I thought that thar war a traitor among us till John told me it warn't no man what betrayed him, it war a woman. If it had been a man I'd have killed him. I've gotter find some other way to git even with you."

"Does your brother know of your intention?" asked Helen, curiously.

David shook his head.

"No," he replied, "I ain't said nothin' to John 'bout gittin' even with you."

Helen gave him a quick, comprehending glance. She guessed instinctively why he was keeping John Steele in ignorance of his intention to be avenged upon her. He feared that John would not be in sympathy with him, that he might protest against his carrying out his intention. She wondered if the mountaineer's love for her had turned to hatred now that he knew she had betrayed him, hatred as mad and fierce as his love had been. Well, it was out of his power to do her harm, and she shuddered as she thought of the awful death to which he was condemned.

But, after all, he was but paying the penalty of his crime, a cowardly, brutal crime. Of late, she had been conscious of a feeling of intense thankfulness that the commonwealth attorney had escaped the bullet of the assassin. Life had not seemed the same to her since the day the slim, erect figure of the commonwealth attorney had appeared in the door of the schoolhouse. The days, that had dragged so slowly, so monotonously, had taken on a glamour, rose-tinted, dazzling. She tried to convince herself at times that she was so happy because the mortgage was paid off on the farm and she possessed sufficient money to enable her to begin a new life. But she knew that she was but trying to delude herself, and that her happiness was due to another and different source.

"Why did you come here to tell me of your intention to be avenged?" she asked curiously of David.

There was maliciousness mingled with the look of hatred he bent upon her.

"I wanted you to know about it and be always afraid," he replied. "I wanted you to be always dreadin' of it, not knowin' when it would come."

Helen winced. To live the life he pictured would indeed be dreadful.

At that moment, Henry Vincent came quickly into the schoolhouse, looking pale and disturbed. An expression of intense relief passed over his face as his eyes fell on Helen.

"Thank God, you are safe!" he exclaimed, coming swiftly toward her. "I have had that fellow," turning upon David, "watched night and day, fearing he might do you some harm. But in the confusion attending the close of the trial, he got away from the detective. I was so dreadfully anxious that I lost no time in coming here."

She flushed and her eyes fell under the look in his eyes. There was something more in them than the natural anxiety he might feel under the circumstances.

Vincent turned again to David. "What brought you here?" he asked sternly.

"Ask her," replied the mountaineer, pointing to Helen, and then he turned and went toward the door.

Vincent looked after him, frowning and undecided, then he turned to Helen. When he reached the door David stopped and looked back. A sinister expression of satisfaction stole over his face as his eyes lingered for a moment upon Vincent and the girl. Then he turned and went out.

"What was the fellow's object in coming here?" Vincent asked.

"He and his brother know what I did," Helen explained. "It appears that David Steele wanted to kill me," she smiled a little wanly. "But John would not permit him to do it, because I am a woman."

Henry Vincent shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"Nice discrimination for a cowardly assassin who kills from ambush!" he exclaimed. "Did David Steele come here to tell you of their magnanimity?" and he smiled.

Helen shook her head. "Oh, no! He came to tell me that he intended to be avenged upon me for what I had done," she replied rather gravely.

"The young hound!" exclaimed Vincent, angrily. "How does he propose to accomplish it?"

"He doesn't know yet," replied Helen, and she went on to tell him all that David had said. "He seems very determined," she added. "I believe he meant all that he said, even his assertion that he would wait years and still be avenged."

Henry Vincent smiled contemptuously. "I do not think you need feel any apprehension in regard to his threats or even take them seriously," he declared. "I was afraid that he might try to do you some bodily harm, and that is why I had him watched."

"That was very good of you," she murmured.

"It was my duty to see that no harm came to you," he said simply.

Helen looked down, then she began quietly gathering up the things on her desk preparatory to departing. His words had brought a chill to her heart, but she was a self-controlled woman and she showed nothing of her feelings. His duty! And she had permitted herself to fancy that his anxiety for her was due to a warmer feeling. Of course, he could not do less than try to protect her under the circumstances.

"I suppose you have heard that John Steele has been found guilty?" queried Vincent.

He spoke a little abstractedly. He was thinking of how beautiful she was. He had never seen so flawless a complexion. And her mouth—a mad longing seized upon him to clasp her in his arms and press his lips to the tropic loveliness of hers.

"Yes, David Steele told me that his brother had been found guilty," and her calm, quiet voice brought Vincent to his senses. "He said that he had always felt that I would bring trouble to his brother," she went on gravely, a troubled look in her velvety eyes, "and that I had done so."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Vincent, sharply. "John Steele is only getting what he richly deserves."

"When is he to be hanged?" asked Helen, as she turned from the desk and took down her cloak from the wall.

"One month from today, the tenth of November," replied Vincent.

Helen shuddered.

"I am glad that I shall not be here at that time," she exclaimed.

He looked at her quickly. "You are going away?"

"Yes," she laid her cloak across the desk and began winding a rose-colored scarf, which was entrancingly becoming, about her head and throat. "I simply loathe the life I have been leading here," she went on, with a touch of passion in her soft voice. "It was the thought of getting away to a new life that tempted me to betray John Steele for the reward. I have sent in my resignation to the school board, and shall be free to leave here in two weeks."

Vincent assisted her with her cloak before he spoke.

"You were made for better things," he said, with a comprehensive gesture which took in the small schoolroom. He paused a moment, and then continued, with a half-smile: "You cannot imagine how surprised I was when I saw you for the first time. I had fancied you so different."

She smiled. There was a bitter pain at her heart and the rose-tinted glamour had changed to gray. How foolish she had been to imagine he cared! The look in his eyes she had mistaken for a deeper feeling was only evoked by her beauty. Most men were given to regarding her admiringly, and she had given little heed to it. She dared not ask herself why she had attached such significance to it from this man, why she had deluded herself in regard to it.

She and Vincent passed out of the schoolhouse. Helen locked the door and they went down the hill together. Vincent's face wore a thoughtful look and he appeared abstracted. At the foot of the hill, Vincent paused and held out his hand.

"Good-by!" he said.

The girl's heart contracted with a sickening pang. Were they parting for good and all? Would she see him no more?

As she gave him her hand, she lifted her eyes to his face. Their eyes met. There was a look in his she could not fathom. He held her hand for a moment without speaking. Then he released it, lifted his hat, and turned away.

Helen walked slowly homeward.

"I have been living in a fool's paradise," she told herself bitterly. "I remember now having heard that the commonwealth attorney was going to marry Senator Ward's daughter." A bitter smile crossed the beauty of her mouth. "I expected to be perfectly happy and contented after I had gotten that money. And now I am crying for the moon," and she laughed dismally.

Absorbed in her thoughts, she hardly noticed the subdued excitement of the town people. The men stood about in groups talking, the street was crowded with vehicles of all kinds, and still they were coming into town. The mountain people, who had attended the trial, were returning. Some were discussing the conviction of John Steele in loud, excited tones; others gravely, quietly, and others again in awed, subdued voices. Helen heard the name of the commonwealth attorney again and again as she passed along, frequently prefaced with an oath.

"I tell you, boys, Vincent's a mighty clever fellow," the postmaster was saying to the crowd about the door of the little office as Helen went by. "He'll be Governor one of these days, take my word for it."

Helen's sense of bitter self-mockery grew deeper. She had not realized before how ambitious a man Henry Vincent was. It did not occur to her that a woman's beauty may prove more potent in a man's life than even a besetting ambition. She was destined to awaken to that fact later.

CHAPTER XI.

"MARRY THE WOMAN YOU LOVE."

THE ruling passion of Henry Vincent's life was ambition, and previous to the day he saw Helen Rhodes for the first time, he would have laughed to scorn the mere suggestion that he would allow anything to stand in the way of the furthering of that ambition.

As he rode slowly along the road from Hollow Glen toward Warfield, after parting with Helen Rhodes, he knew that an impelling passion, as strong as that which had heretofore been the ruling power of his life, possessed him. In a word, he was passionately in love, and with a woman whose only asset was her beauty, who possessed neither the money, social position, nor influence which he believed essential in the woman he married for the achievement of his ambition. Ambition! There was something in life more desirable, sweeter, more satisfying than the fulfillment of a man's ambition—love!

He thought of Kathryn Ward, whom he had certainly expected to make his wife, with a feeling of repulsion. The very thought of a marriage without love had become utterly distasteful to him. He thought of the evening on which he had been on the point of proposing to Kathryn, and breathed a sigh of relief that the entrance of her father had prevented his doing so. But still he had by no means made up his mind to ask Helen Rhodes to marry him, though he knew that his love for her made marriage with another woman impossible, even a woman as cold as Kathryn Ward, who would hardly desire a demonstrative husband, her own nature being utterly incapable of responding to tenderness and passion.

That evening at supper Mrs. Vincent, who was most anxious to discuss the trial and conviction of John Steele, found her son strangely abstracted and inattentive. Finally after he had replied a number of times at random to her remarks and questions, she exclaimed:

"What on earth is the matter with you, Henry? What are you thinking about? You are not listening to a word I am saying. You are like a man in a dream."

"I beg your pardon, mother," said Vincent, rousing himself. "I must admit I am rather preoccupied this evening."

"I should say you were," declared Mrs. Vincent. "What is it you are thinking about? One of your cases?"

Vincent laughed a little.

"Yes, I might call it a case," he replied. He paused a moment, and then added, grimly, "And one of the hardest, the most difficult I ever had to handle."

"Oh, you'll handle it all right, Henry!" declared Mrs. Vincent, confidently. "You are so very clever," looking at him proudly. "Every one is talking about the speech you made today for the prosecution. It was superb! I am very, very proud of you, Henry. But I did feel sorry for that poor wretch, Steele. Your arraignment of him was fearful."

"It wasn't a bit too severe, mother," said Vincent, a little absently. He was silent for a moment, then he asked, "Mother, did you and my father marry because you loved each other?"

"Why, of course," replied Mrs. Vincent, looking a little surprised at the abrupt change of subject. "What an odd question, Henry!"

"I don't know about it being such an odd question, mother," declared Vincent, with a whimsical smile. "People do not always marry for love, you know."

"I suppose not," Mrs. Vincent admitted. "But I never could understand a woman's marrying a man she did not love."

"How about a man's marrying a woman he does not love?" queried Vincent, with a half-smile.

"It is, perhaps, different with a man," replied Mrs. Vincent, thoughtfully. "But there is something repelling to me in the thought of either a woman or man marrying without love."

Again the whimsical smile crossed Vincent's lips. "And yet you seem to want me to marry Kathryn Ward," he said.

"Why, Henry, what do you mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Vincent. "Don't you care for Kathryn? Don't you love her?"

Vincent shook his head. "No, mother, I certainly do not," he replied.

Mrs Vincent stared at him bewilderingly. "I certainly thought you were in love with her, Henry," she declared plaintively.

Henry Vincent shrugged his shoulders. "A man could as easily fall in love with a marble statue as with Kathryn Ward," he said.

"You think her cold?"

"I do, indeed. She's an iceberg."

"I am not so sure that she has as cold a nature as you fancy," declared Mrs. Vincent, reflectively. "But if you are not in love with Kathryn, Henry, why have you given the impression that you wished to marry her?"

"I did wish to marry her, mother," replied Vincent. "I had every intention of asking her to marry me, because I believed that such a marriage would help me in my career. I think so still."

"You mean that it was ambition and not love which prompted you to marry Kathryn Ward?"

Vincent nodded.

"Exactly."

"What has caused you to change your mind?"

"My love for another woman?"

She looked at him quickly, questioningly.

"Who is she, Henry?"

"Helen Rhodes."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Vincent, with a shocked look. "That country schoolteacher? John Steele's sweetheart? The woman who betrayed him for the reward? Oh, Henry, impossible! You don't mean it?"

"Helen Rhodes is a lady, mother," Vincent replied gravely, "well educated and refined. And she is exceedingly beautiful."

"I had no idea that she is what you claim, Henry. I fancied her a very ordinary person."

"I quite understand that, mother. I was never more surprised in my life than when I saw her. I think I fell in love with her at first sight," and he smiled. "I know I was charmed by her beauty. She charmed me more every time I saw her, until I awoke to the fact that I loved her." He paused and added, in a lower voice, "And then the struggle began."

"What sort of a struggle, Henry?" asked Mrs. Vincent.

"The struggle, mother, between love and ambition," he replied.

She arose, and going to him laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Marry the woman you love, dear," she said gently. He glanced up at her quickly, questioningly, a soft glow in his eyes. "There is nothing so sweet in life, Henry, as love," she continued. "I married your father because I loved him, and I was perfectly happy. I wanted you to marry Kathryn Ward, because I knew it would be a fine match for you. But I thought you cared for her. I have never seen Helen Rhodes, but I do not believe that you would learn to love a woman who is unworthy of you."

"Wait until you see her, mother, and then you can judge for yourself as to her beauty and her worth," said Vincent, happily. "I know you will be charmed with her." He arose, took his mother in his arms, and kissed her. "You have made me very happy, mother. I was in a wretched state of indecision."

"And you are no longer so?" she queried, a little wistfully.

He shook his head, smiling. "No, indeed. You have thoroughly convinced me that love is best, better than anything else in all the world. I am going tomorrow and ask Helen Rhodes to become my wife. Wish me good luck, mother."

"I do, dear, with all my heart."

When she was alone, Mrs. Vincent's face grew a little grave. She had advised her son to do what she believed would be for his happiness, but she was greatly disappointed, for she had wanted him to marry Kathryn Ward. And her woman's intuition told her that Kathryn was not as indifferent and cold as Vincent fancied. She knew that no one would be aware of just how Kathryn felt about Henry's marrying another woman. She was too proud and self-contained a woman to give any sign of her feelings.

"She has a very secretive nature," mused Mrs. Vincent. "No one will ever quite understand her unless she chooses to reveal herself."

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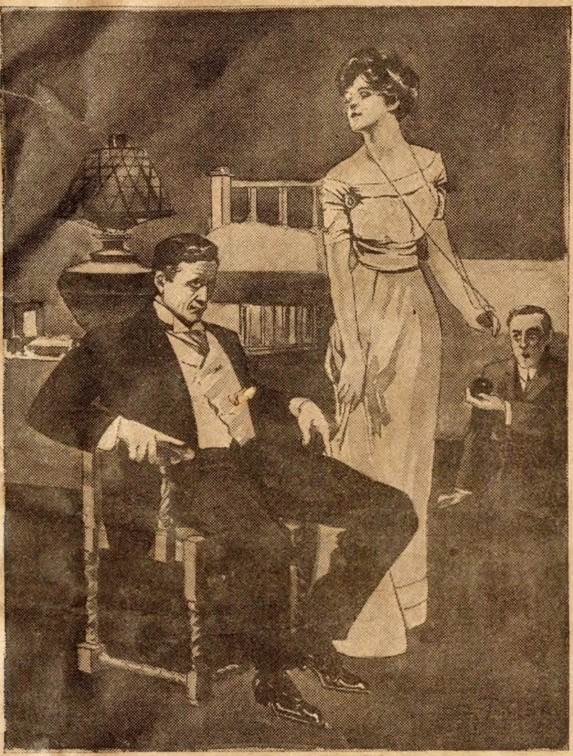

"I emerged with the bomb in my hand."

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CHAPTER IV.

I WAS not present at this interview between Maxine and Dorothy Seldon, but later I learned that it proved somewhat harrowing to the young lady and unsatisfactory to Maxine. Perhaps the unpleasant sensationalism of the newspapers in trying to connect the beautiful daughter of Horace Seldon with the mysterious trunk murder had created in her a spirit of resentment, which she was not totally able to conceal when questioned by one working even in her interests.

But then it was always difficult to fathom Maxine's real emotions. He frequently used harsh methods in quizzing a person when another would have been gentle and respectful; his attitude was often severe when he knew a suspect was innocent, while toward the one morally certain to be guilty he was all meekness and deference. Through such a simple process he had led more than one criminal to admissions that were his undoing.

Dorothy Seldon was a beautiful and attractive woman, with a strong personality of her own, and, as I subsequently learned, she had spirit and courage far above the average of her class. A slight clash of wits and tongue may have tinged that first interview, and both had retired from the conflict convinced that a subtle antagonism had come between them to prevent mutual confidences.

Maxine returned late at night. I waited up for him, dozing and nodding between the striking hours of the clock. With scarcely a nod of recognition, Maxine divested himself of coat and shoes, and flung himself into an easy chair, a profound sense of depression overwhelming him. There he sat for an hour, brooding and dreaming, scarcely conscious of my presence and totally unmindful of the flight of time. When the silence was beginning to grow intolerable, he moved and glanced toward me with lack luster eyes in which there was infinite sadness and dejection.

"Montague," he said, in a lifeless voice, "did you ever hear of the Cassiopeia plant? It is found only in the wild swamps of the upper Amazon, and only a few specimens have ever been brought to this country. Its root has a peculiar odor when dried—a perfume that is almost as intoxicating as alcohol, and so delightful to the senses that one never forgets it."

I had to plead ignorance of any knowledge of such a remarkable plant, but his question aroused my interest.

"Where have you stumbled across such an unusual plant, Maxine?" I asked.

"I haven't seen it; I have only inhaled its delightful perfume, and I shall never forget it. I thought I had classified all odors known to science, but this is unclassifiable. It is narcotic, intoxicating, producing a species of delightful sensations that is not comparable to anything else. I imagine it might he worth a fortune if it could be introduced into this country on a commercial scale."

"If it's all you say," I replied, "it might become a lusty rival to morphine."

"Perhaps, if abused and taken in quantities," was the dreamy answer. "I don't know about that. I was thinking only of its wonderful virtues as a delicate perfume. It's perfectly harmless then, and could be used with impunity. When I said it was intoxicating, I was speaking only figuratively. I meant it was so soothing and pleasant to the senses that it brought dreamy sensations of tropical woods and spice-laden orchards, with the birds and flowers all about you."

"It must be a wonderful perfume," I said with a nod.

"It is—wonderful!"

"Where did you smell it?" I asked, after another pause.

"I shall always associate Dorothy Seldon with it," he replied slowly. "Her father, who is an importer of drugs and rare plants, obtained a specimen of Cassiopeia for her and had it made into a delicate perfume. When I first met her I was conscious of a new and volatile odor that caused me to forget many things that had been in my mind. It was a blending of the attar of roses with violets and hyacinths—no, not that; all of the flowers of the field could not do it justice. It was something different and unique."

I smiled as I watched the dreamy expression of rapture on his face.

"Perhaps she gave you some of it," I suggested.

"No, it's too precious to give away; but I must have some of it. It's almost worth a trip to the upper Amazon to possess a few ounces of such a wonderful perfume."

I got nothing else from him that night about the Seldon trunk mystery, nor of Dorothy Seldon, whom he had interviewed that day. He lapsed back into his pensive brooding, and finding him uncommunicative, I finally rose and retired to my room on the floor above. Maxine merely nodded as I bade him good night, and instantly forgot me again.

I slept long and profoundly, having put in a hard day, and I was not awakened until well toward morning. Then I sat up with a nameless terror clutching at my heart. I had been awakened by a noise that is difficult to describe. It was something between the growl of a wild beast and the scream of a man in mortal pain, followed by a demoniacal laugh that set the blood to curdling.

It seemed at first as if this soul-terrifying cry had been a part of a morbid dream, and I sat up some time in bed rubbing my eyes to clear the mind of any strange visions. It was dark all about me, the faint streaks of breaking daylight not having yet penetrated the curtained windows. As my senses returned, I could hear the ticking of the clock, but otherwise all was still.

The longer I thought of it, the more convinced I grew that the unearthly cry was not connected with my dreams, but was a reality. When this conclusion had finally mastered me, I jumped out of bed and opened the door leading into the upper hall; a rush of light into the room from the hall below bewildered me for an instant, and I drew back as if something had struck me.

Maxine never retired leaving a light burning, and the unusualness of the hour convinced me that something was wrong. Either Maxine had retired, forgetting to turn out the light, or he had risen from his bed startled by the same cry that had alarmed me. Cautiously I made my way out into the hall and peered over the banisters; but everything was so silent, with the exception of the comfortable ticking of the clock, that I began to feel my alarm was unjustified. I crept down the stairs noiselessly, pausing at each step to listen. There was no one in the hall, and no sign of anything unusual.

Maxine's office opened directly back of the long hall, and from my position at the other end I could see the light blazing from a solitary electric bulb over his desk, just as I left it upon retiring. Standing in front of the desk, as if startled abruptly from slumber, stood Maxine, intently listening and gazing about him. He started toward me as my footfalls reached his ears, and a look of relief entered his face.

"I thought you had retired, Montague," he said, in an even voice. "What time is it?"

"Nearly four, sir," I replied. "I did retire, Maxine, and I was awakened by a terrible cry of a voice that sounded——"

"You heard something?" he asked, rubbing his eyes.

"Yes, and I came down to find out what it was. You didn't call, I suppose?"

"No, I must have fallen asleep here in the chair. Something startled me; it must have been the same cry you heard. What kind of a noise was it?"

"Why, sir—it—it's hard to say," I stammered. "I was asleep myself, and at first I thought it was only a part of my dream. It was a horrible scream—half-animal and half-human—and the laugh—ugh! I can hear it now! It makes me shiver."

"It is strange," he replied slowly. "I had an impression of the same thing—a scream and then a laugh. It roused me so abruptly that I wasn't sure where I was."

"It was in the house—right in this room," I said with conviction.

"No one could get in here, Montague, without attracting attention."

We examined the windows, which were all tightly fastened, and the door, which was locked and bolted. There were no means of exit except through these. Even the door leading to the basement was locked and bolted.

"We must both have been dreaming, Montague," said Maxine, finally. "No one has been in here."

I shook my head negatively. "It wasn't a dream," I replied. "Besides, both of us wouldn't dream of the same thing."

"Perhaps something fell, and the noise startled us so that our minds twisted the noise into the semblance of a scream."

"I don't think so," I replied stubbornly. "I heard it too distinctly to be deceived."

"If any one has been here, Montague, we shall find some trace of him. No one can enter the office and get out of it without leaving some clew behind."

"We'll find it then, sir. I'm sure of that."

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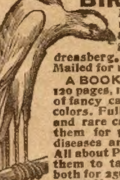

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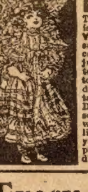

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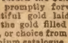

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"Suppose you try your skill then, Montague. I'll help if you need me."

Maxine had recovered himself and was smiling whimsically at me. He was accepting the whole affair now as a joke. The coincidence of both of us awakening from slumber by the same blood-curdling cry did not impress him greatly. He smiled and joked as I studied the window-sills and the hall floor in the endeavor to find some mark that would point indubitably to the entrance of a stranger. The more baffled I grew in my search, the more sarcastic Maxine became; and he twitted me often about my lack of skill in unraveling the mystery.

"I wouldn't waste time further, Montague," he said finally. "We'd better finish the night with a little more sleep. It will be daylight shortly. I'll turn off the light and retire to my room."

While I continued to grumble and peer sharply about me, he approached his desk, and stood with one hand on the button of the electric bulb to snap off the current. Suddenly his eyes dropped to the desk, and for an instant they remained there in a fixed, puzzled intensity. I stood in the doorway ready to leave, when the intensity of his gaze and a slight paling of his face caused me to hesitate and half turn around.

"What is it, Maxine?" I asked, as he dropped his hand from the electric bulb, and seized a sheet of white paper on the desk. "Found anything?"

Instead of replying to my question, he brought the paper up closer and scrutinized it carefully and intently. There was a strained look in the eyes and a ghastly expression about the immovable lips. I waited for him to speak, but he tried my patience almost to the limit.

"Montague," he said finally, in a queer voice, "you were right. Some one has been here."

"You have a clew?" I demanded eagerly.

Maxine clutched the paper in his hands as if to conceal it, but the next moment he spread it out on the top of the desk, and said quietly:

"Yes, Montague, a very important clew. What do you make of that?"

It was just an ordinary piece of paper, but scrawled over it was a rude drawing and some figures made with a hard lead pencil; it was such a drawing as a school boy might make in a moment of aimless mental wandering, and the figures were placed in a crooked line running slightly uphill across the sheet of paper. The paper was soiled, and had every evidence of having been folded and creased to fit some filthy pocket where it had been carried for some time.

"What do you make of it?" I stammered, a little puzzled at the importance Maxine attached to it.

When he spoke his voice was serious and a little husky; his face, too, had a strained look, which, in addition to his unusual pallor, gave me a slight shock.

"The paper doesn't belong to you?" I added, after a moment's pause. "You think somebody has been here and left it?"

Maxine nodded and continued to study it in silence.

"Why should he leave it?" I went on, trying to fill in the pause. "I see nothing particularly interesting in a dirty piece of paper with a boy's scrawl over it. Perhaps one of the servants dropped it."

"No," Maxine replied, shaking his head, "it wasn't here when I fell asleep; and none of the servants ever come in this office when I'm here."

"Who else could have left it?"

"The man whose cry and laugh we heard, Montague. You were looking for a clew; now you have it."

"Then you believe somebody was here?"

"Yes, Montague, and this is his visiting card."

"A pretty dirty one," I answered. "I'd hate to handle it without a pair of gloves."

"You don't recognize the handwriting?" queried Maxine, with a grim smile.

"I see no writing—nothing but a line of figures and a rough drawing."

"Ah, Montague, your eyes are blind! You see only the self-evident. What do you make of this in the corner?"

"Why, sir," I stammered, "that's just a smudge of dirt, and—and——"

I stopped and looked up hastily; Maxine was regarding me with a quizzical smile, and my eyes dropped instantly to the paper again.

"It's a fingerprint," I managed to murmur finally, after a close scrutiny of the smudge of dirt again. "Yes, a fingerprint. Is it not, Maxine?"

"You're improving, Montague; it certainly is a fingerprint, and a rare one. Did you ever see it before?"

I shook my head in silence; Maxine searched in his pocket for something, and finally brought out the fingerprint tracing of the man who had committed the trunk murder.

"Compare them, Montague," he said quietly.

I started at the wonderful resemblance between the two; it required no second examination to see that they were exact duplicates of each other. Every line and mark was there, traced so accurately that a novice could have identified either one by the other.

"He has been here?" I exclaimed in awe.

Maxine merely smiled, and studied the paper carefully; then whipping out his pocket magnifying glass he subjected the paper to a still closer scrutiny. I watched and waited for any further development. Handing the glass and paper to me, he said, finally:

"He's been more than generous, Montague, with his signature. There are two prints—a forefinger and a thumb. It looks as if he intended to give his full name in time. The thumbprint is even more pronounced as a specimen than the finger. Montague our visitor must be a man of unique personality. Perhaps this is a challenge; he knows I'm on the case, and that I have his fingerprint. He presents me now with his thumbprint. Quite unique, Montague, quite unique!"

Rubbing his hands with ill-concealed glee, Maxine placed the piece of paper on the desk, snapped on another electric light, and seated himself as one accepting a problem to be solved with keen enjoyment.

CHAPTER V.

THE unexpected discovery of the prints of a thumb and forefinger outlined in grimy fashion on one corner of the paper banished all thoughts of resuming our interrupted slumber. With almost as much eagerness as Maxine I drew a chair close up to the desk and glanced over his shoulder. For a few absorbed moments he studied the queer piece of paper in his chair in silence, and then dropping it down on the desk he sat back in his chair and stared straight ahead of him. I did not dare to interrupt this brooding, for at such times Maxine was inclined to be irritable and unpleasant.

The mystery of the midnight visit, and the strange similarity of the fingerprint on the paper with that found on the bloody rag in the Seldon house, convinced me that this was something more than mere coincidence. I began to realize that the criminal, whover he was, had visited Maxine's office with some diabolical intent, either to recover the first fingerprint, or to wreak vengeance upon the great detective who held in his possession the only tangible clew to the trunk murder. Perhaps he had shadowed and followed Maxine from the Seldon house, and finding him asleep in the office had effected an entrance for the purpose of committing another crime if thwarted in his mission.

But that did not explain the scream and the horrible laugh—not unless they had been emitted in rage at the sudden awakening of Maxine from his sleep. It did not explain how the intruder entered and left the room and house, with all the doors and windows locked and bolted. No, the mystery was beyond me. I frowned and shook my head in silence.

"You think he came here to kill me, Montague?" Maxine asked suddenly, breaking the silence.

"He came to destroy that fingerprint you have of him," I answered.

"And left his thumbprint behind by mistake, eh?" chuckled Maxine.

"He certainly is a bungler to leave such clews."

"You think so, Montague? Perhaps the paper and fingerprints were presented to me intentionally."

"For what purpose?" I asked, in puzzled surprise.

"For the same purpose he left the bloody rag, with the fingerprint on it, after the Seldon crime."

"You believe it was intentional?"

"Doesn't it look so to you, Montague?"

"I hadn't thought of that. But why?"

Maxine shrugged his shoulders.

What do you make of the rude drawing on the paper, Montague?"

"It looks," he replied, staring hard at it, "as if he had been trying to make a sketch of something, and——"

"Does it remind you of anything in particular?"

"Why—yes—no!"

"Looks to me like a smoking bomb, Montague, just about to explode."

"So it does, Maxine, now that you speak of it. Yes, it was intended for that."

The drawing was certainly that of a round piece of iron, with a smoking fuse attached—not a very perfect resemblance to a bomb, but sufficient to convince me now that my eyes were opened.

"So he was bent on some crime?" I said. "Do you suppose he intended to blow up this place?"

Again a quiet, noncommittal shrug of the shoulders

"If you think it is lying around here anywhere, Montague, you might look for it before it explodes and blows us up."

The uneasiness caused by this suggestion made me turn and half rise from my seat. Maxine watched me furtively, and finally set my mind at rest.

"I don't think you'll find it, Montague. No, that wasn't his intention. He had another purpose. The dropping of this piece of paper on my desk was no accident any more than the concealment of the bloody rag in the Seldon basement was. No, Montague, that isn't the explanation of it."

"What is it, then?" I asked impatiently.

Maxine slumped down in his chair until his shoulders were barely on a level with the arms of it, and his head dropped on his chest, his chin resting there, and his brooding eyes closed in deep, abstract thought. The mystery of the midnight visitor and the strange memento he left behind had Maxine puzzled; he frowned several times and opened his eyes, but closed them shortly again with a shake of the head; he grabbed at the paper once and feverishly studied it, but replaced it on the desk with a little impatient flip of the fingers.

He sat there so long thinking and brooding that daylight began to steal in through the windows, and the electric lights grew feeble and sickly; the rattle of an early milkman disturbed the outside stillness, and once a pedestrian passed under the window whistling some ragtime tune.

"Montague," he said, finally rousing himself from a deep reverie with a sigh, "this is no coincidence. It's a message to me—it's a challenge!"

"A challenge, Maxine?" I stammered, and then stopped, unable to follow his reasoning.

"Yes, a challenge. No amateur in crime could do that; no ordinary criminal could come in here and leave a message and get away without arousing me. I'm a light sleeper, Montague, as you know."

I nodded energetically, for I had abundant reason to know that the great Maxine never nodded, never slept, never permitted drowsiness to overcome his senses. He was always awake; even when seeming to slumber his mind's eye was alert and active. It was inconceivable to me that another could enter the room where he was and leave it undetected.

"Yet this man, or woman—perhaps it was a woman, Montague—came in here, faced me, and left a challenge of wits, Montague."

He straightened himself in the chair and looked blankly at the opposite wall. There was a light in the dark, brooding eyes that I had never seen before.

"Can it be," he said, talking more to himself than to me, "that there is such a person?"

"What person do you refer to, Maxine?"

He toyed aimlessly with his microscope for some time before he answered.

"What person, Montague?" he mused. "I don't know yet. I've never seen him; I don't know his name; he is an impalpable personality to me, a mysterious creature."

"You mean the one who left this paper here?"

"Yes," he nodded, "the one who visited us tonight, and the one who committed the Seldon trunk murder."

Suddenly he dropped his hand heavily on the table and exclaimed in a jubilant voice:

"Montague, if it's true, it will be the realization of my ambition."

"What will be, sir? I don't follow you."

"You remember my conversation with Inspector McGonigle the other evening? I told him then that all the great master geniuses had abandoned crime as a profession, and only small, petty ones were left to prey upon society."

"Yes, I remember."

"Well, Montague, I believe I was mistaken. There is one left. You recall my remarks about that fingerprint? To me it was a most remarkable verification of my theory that character was demonstrated by fingerprints. I told you that the owner of that print was a genius in crime, a past-master in scheming, a monster for cruelty and devilish work, a man among millions. Well, I was right; this thumbprint, which he was good enough to leave with me tonight, verifies all that I said of him. He's a remarkable man, a typical genius in all that would make a person successful."

"You believe all that, sir?" I asked, a little skeptically.

"Yes, Montague, and more. I believe he has challenged me to a battle of wits. Knowing that I had obtained the only clew he left behind in the trunk case, he has followed me up and defied me. He is so secure that he can outwit me that he's presented me with a finger and thumb print of his right hand."

"You will soon catch him, then, Maxine," I replied with a confident smile. "He knows little of your ability, or he would never be so rash."

"You have great faith in me, Montague, and I'll admit some things—some little experiences we've had together—may partly justify you in that conclusion. But——"

"All the world shares my faith in you, Maxine," I replied warmly. "People haven't forgotten the great Scarlet Hood Mystery or the Green House murder case, or the Maiden Lane robbery, or——"

"They were simple mysteries, Montague," he interrupted wearily, with a wave of the hand. "But this case of the fingerprints is different. Here we have a past-master in crime to face, a man who can match brains with us, and perhaps for all we know, outwit us in the end. That makes the case all the more interesting. Whether I win or lose, it will be a game worth while; it will be a glorious chase; a keen matching of brains and wits. I know of nothing that I could desire more. I've prayed for this to happen, Montague, and now it will be the keenest enjoyment of my life to fight him for the mastery."

The flush of enthusiasm on the face pleased me; it showed me the great Maxine of old, he who had startled the world by his skill in solving mysteries that baffled all others. I was thankful at last that something had really transpired to rouse him from the great cloud of melancholia that had slowly settled over his spirits.

"Inspector McGonigle would like to hear you say that," I remarked, with a smile. "Perhaps you will let him know that you're still in the game."

"No, I think not, not for the present. We won't say anything about this mysterious person until we're surer of his existence. Perhaps"—with a little despondent sigh—"he may not measure up to the standard; he may be only an ordinary man, a little more audacious than others of his kind."

"But the fingerprints! You said they denoted a man of unusual capacity and genius."

"Yes, that's true; I must accept him as such or my theory of fingerprints falls."

He picked up the dirty piece of paper and studied the thumbprint more anxiously than before. I could see he was more interested in verifying his previous reading of character from these fine, curling lines than in the mystery of the paper itself. Finally he dropped it again with a sigh of relief.

"I must be right," he reflected. "My theory is correct. That man is a monster, a brute, a brainy genius. Montague, my reputation stands or falls on that. If I am wrong, I shall never dare take a case again."

"One mistake after a lifetime of successes wouldn't blast a man's reputation," I replied, with a smile.

"It would blast mine—in my own eyes—and when a man has lost faith in himself, what matters it how the world views him? I could never recover from the blow."

"Your reputation would live whether you lost faith in yourself or not, Maxine. It's too well established to be blotted out by a puff of wind like that."

"Well," with a sudden sigh of relief, rousing himself, "I accept the challenge of this—this—unknown person. Already I seem to feel his personality hovering about me; it's in the air, Montague. Perhaps even now he's smiling at us, watching and waiting for our next move. It's clearly our next move. Let us study his message and see if there's any meaning to it."

So absorbed had we become in the fingerprints outlined on the corner of the paper that we had paid little attention to the drawing and figures; they had seemed at first meaningless, and even now they appeared to us like the aimless scrawl of one whose mind was dwelling upon something else. The paper had apparently been taken from a dirty pocket and torn off hastily for the purpose.

Maxine knitted his eyebrows and squinted long and earnestly at the paper, turning it upside down and crosswise to view the queer drawing at various angles. Once or twice he studied it through his magnifying glass, but without, apparently, finding any clew, I was growing a little tired of the long vigil—it was really morning now, and I was becoming conscious of a gnawing appetite and the cries of an empty stom-

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ach that demanded breakfast—when suddenly Maxine rose hastily from his seat and consulted his watch.

"Montague," he said in a sharp, excited voice, "there's going to be another murder, and this message is a challenge to me to prevent it. Quick. We have no time to lose!"

CHAPTER VI.

MAXINE'S startling exclamation brought me to my feet instantly, but I was too bewildered to do more than stand before him and stare incredulously. He was now thoroughly aroused, alert and tense, with every faculty keyed to a high pitch. The mind that had unraveled so many mysteries in the past was working rapidly and with quick decisions.

"This arch fiend of ours has planted a bomb somewhere," he continued, after a pause, "and when the time fuse is burnt up somebody will be killed. Montague, crime prevention is worth more than crime detection. We must be there ahead of the explosion."

"But," I gasped, "when and where will the crime be committed?"

"Ah, that's for us to solve. This cunning demon has given us the key to it, but can we use it?"

"You mean it is on the paper?"

"Yes, and a part of it is plain as day. Read those figures—3-13-10. What do you make of them?"

"Why, I don't see anything to—to——"

"What month is it, Montague?"

"March, of course."

"Exactly, and March is the third month of the year. What day of the month is it?"

"Thursday, the thirteenth. Yes, I see what you mean. But what is the 10 for?"

"The time, Montague—the time when the bomb will explode—ten o'clock this morning or tonight."

"It's six now, sir," I said, consulting my watch. "We have only four hours if it's to be this morning."

"Yes, four hours, and we don't know where the crime is to be committed."

"I don't see how we can find that out, sir. There's no clew to that."

"Isn't there?"

Maxine smiled as he asked this question.

"I see none—not unless we get a clew by reading the figures backward."

"That would hardly enlighten us. No, he wouldn't be so clumsy as all that. But the clew is there."

"Where, sir?" I asked stupidly. "I don't see it."

"No, it can't be seen; it's invisible to the eyes."

"Then—how can you know it?"

"Ah, Montague, the Lord blessed us with other senses than sight. You have ears, haven't you, and you can hear?"

"Yes, I have good ears, but——"

"And you can feel, can't you?"

"Of course," a little testily. "But I feel nothing—the paper is like any other piece of waste paper."

"You could taste, too, couldn't you, if you used your tongue properly?" Maxine continued ironically.

"What is it you've discovered, Maxine?" I blurted out, anxious to learn the secret, and a little nettled at his catechizing.

"I have eliminated all the senses but one, Montague, and you still fail to see my point. Well, I will explain in a minute. You remember the wonderful Cassiopeia plant I spoke to you about last night—the plant with a wonderful perfume?"

I nodded in comprehension.

"Well, Montague, that's the clew to this mystery."

"You mean the perfume is—is here?" I stammered.

"Very faintly, Montague. If you use your nose you will detect it. Smell of it very carefully and reverently, Montague, for it is a rare and priceless perfume. You may never have a chance to sniff it again. I understand the perfume is worth hundreds of dollars a single drop."

I clutched at the grimy paper and carried it to my nose. At first I detected no odor, but in a short time a delicate fragrance seemed to assail the nostrils and fill the whole head with a delicious sensation. I found myself eagerly sniffing it, forgetting my surroundings in the desire to inhale the last sweet scent of the paper.

"It's a wonderful perfume, Montague, isn't it?" Maxine asked finally, taking the paper from me and applying it to his nose.

"Nothing else like it in the world. Give me one more sniff at it."

I snatched the paper from him and smelt of it again and again.

"Where did you say you first smelt this?" I asked dreamily.

"On the person of Dorothy Seldon."

I dropped the paper and stared in amazement at him. "On Dorothy Seldon?" I repeated after him.

"Yes, I shall always associate her with the perfume. She is the only one in this country who possesses any of the essence. Her father imported one of the plants a few weeks ago. It was obtained at great cost and risk of life on the upper Amazon, but it's worth it."

"But what has she to do with this paper—and the fingerprints, Maxine? Surely you don't suspect her of being—being——"

I laughed at the idea of confounding her with the criminal to whom we had been ascribing such remarkable powers. I glanced down at the dirty fingerprints and shook my head.

"No, Montague," Maxine said quietly, "they're not the fingerprints of a woman."

"Then you're not fighting her?" I said, in a relieved voice. "You don't suspect her?"

"Suspicions don't amount to anything, Montague," was the cool answer, "not until you have something tangible to go by. But we have our clew. This piece of paper has come from the Seldon house or from Dorothy Seldon. We must follow it up before ten o'clock. Perhaps we can pick up the trail there and follow it."

To me this clew of the perfume seemed too uncertain and unreliable to attach much importance to it, and I was still unconvinced that the drawing on the paper and the figures meant anything; but Maxine had a way of arriving at conclusions that often seemed to defy ordinary methods of reasoning, and as events generally proved that he was right, I deferred now to his superior leadership. We partook of a hasty breakfast, and before eight o'clock we were on the way to the Seldon mansion. The bit of paper that was responsible for our early morning walk had been tucked away in Maxine's pocket, and occasionally he patted his breast to make certain that it was still in his possession.

Reaching the Seldon home, we were admitted by the butler and requested to take a seat in the great hall while a message was sent up to Miss Seldon.

"Tell her," Maxine said, in his sharp, incisive way, "that I must see her at once—it's extremely important."

"Yes, sir," responded the well-trained servant, and vanished.

He was gone a considerable time, and we had ample opportunity to study our surroundings. Maxine, I noted, paid little attention to them. He had, I believed, visited the place several times in the last few days, and had probably fixed in his mind every article of furnishings in every room of the house. He seldom needed a second visit to a place to make him intimately acquainted with every nook and corner of it. Blindfolded he could often find his way about in an apartment filled with furniture in which he had had but one hasty glance. His comprehensive way of gathering in all the details in one swift glance had stood him in good stead on more than one occasion; and I had often marveled at it.

As for my part, I enjoyed the wait in the hall, and took advantage of the opportunity to study the costly objects of art scattered around; the beautiful tapestries covering the walls; the deep, thick Oriental rugs of almost priceless value, and the wonderful collection of curios assembled in a cabinet on one side. I was in the midst of reflection bearing on the value of the furnishings, and perhaps secretly envying the man who could afford to own them, when the door at the end of the long hall opened noiselessly. Instead of the former butler, there stood a picture of beauty. She watched us narrowly for a moment, and then advanced to meet us.

"You wish to see me?" she asked, in a voice of aloofness.

"It's not a question of seeing you, Miss Seldon," replied Maxine. "It's far more important than that."

She stopped; and in spite of her haughtiness she paled a little, and her voice trembled.

"What is it that's so important?" she asked, a little fearfully.

"I must search the house from top to bottom—and do it quickly," replied Maxine.

A frown gathered on the pretty face, and a flush of color entered the cheeks; she drew back a step and immediately recovered herself.

"That's a strange request, Mr. Maxine, and very bluntly put. Suppose I refuse?"

"I'd have to search it then without your approval."

Maxine could be very blunt and unpleasant if he chose; why he assumed this hostile attitude now I could not imagine. For my part it would have been extremely difficult to say anything to offend the woman. She bit her lip with sudden determination.

"It's not at all convenient to have you search the house now," she said coldly, and turned as if to dismiss us without further explanations. "If you call at ten I may be able to accommodate you."

Maxine smiled. "Why at ten, Miss Seldon?" he asked, in his most persuasive tone.

"Because," she returned haughtily, "that happens to be the hour I choose."

"There is no other reason, I suppose, Miss Seldon."

The words and voice caused her to pause and look inquiringly at the speaker.

"What other reason would I have?" she asked, with a little show of curiosity.

"Perhaps it's merely a coincidence," replied Maxine, "but it was at ten o'clock that we expected it to happen. Or was it ten at night? Perhaps you can enlighten us, Miss Seldon?"

The woman stared at us in silence, her lips parted and her eyes wide open.

"I don't know what you're talking about. What do you refer to? Oh," with a relieved sigh, "I suppose this is another trick to try to entrap me into saying something that you think will incriminate me. All right, Mr. Maxine," very sweetly, "I will yield. You can search the house now or at ten this morning or at ten tonight. It really makes no difference to me. I'll send James to show you around."

Maxine suddenly changed his tactics; he bowed low, and in his most winning voice said:

"You will do us a great favor, Miss Seldon, if you will not send James. We should consider it a pleasure we don't deserve if you will accompany us. We were rude in forcing our way in so abruptly, but it was something very important. Perhaps you will pardon us after you know all the circumstances. If we do not find it, we will——"

"What is it you expect to find?" she interrupted.

"I don't expect to find it; I only hope we may—and before ten o'clock."

She gazed curiously at Maxine, all her anger departing. Turning aside for us to pass, she laughed lightly, and spoke without a trace of resentment or anger in her voice.

"You detectives are always so mysterious," she said. "You seem to have a double meaning to all you say. I hope you may find what you're looking for, Mr. Maxine. I will help you all I can. But I've been bothered to death by the police and newspaper reporters until I feel as if I never want to see either again. Which part of the house do you wish to search first?"

"Your private bedchamber, Miss Seldon."

For the fraction of a second the old antagonism seemed to flash in her eyes, and she stood back in surprise, biting her lip and looking searchingly at the speaker.

"What do you expect to find there?" she asked. "It is a strange request."

"It will probably simplify our search," returned Maxine, smilingly.

"Very well; you have my permission. I will call James to show you the way."

"I much prefer that you wouldn't. It may not be wise to have too many in the secret. Can't you show us the way? For that matter, I could find it without a guide, Miss Seldon, but I think you may be interested in our search."

She nodded her head and turned abruptly to ascend the broad staircase. Maxine and I brought up the rear. On the upper landing, she paused a moment to speak to a maid who passed, and then turned to the right and opened a door that admitted us into her private apartments. They were exquisitely furnished and decorated, with the sunlight filtering through silken curtains; and a soft breeze laden with the delicate odor of fresh cut flowers filled the rooms and enamored our senses. Maxine stepped across the threshold and sniffed softly.

"Ah, the wonderful Cassiopeia!" he breathed. "I smelt it before I crossed the threshold."

"You like it, Mr. Maxine?" she asked, a little vanity in her voice and manner.

"It is the most exquisite perfume in the world, Miss Seldon. Some day I hope to possess some of it."

"Perhaps I may gratify your desire," she replied graciously. "I believe papa intends to send an expedition up the Amazon after more of the plants."

Already Maxine's eyes were roving about the room, taking in the different objects, and noting anything unusual in their arrangements; and taking my cue from him I made the most of the opportunity to investigate this dainty boudoir. Retiring to a position near the window, Miss Seldon watched us with a puzzled expression on her face; she bit her lip several times and flushed with annoyance as we handled some article of personal feminine wear, and with unsentimental touch moved aside everything that could possibly conceal the thing we were searching for.

Our search continued for some minutes without results; Miss Seldon's annoyance was increasing; and Maxine was showing signs of disappointment. We had worked deftly through closet and dresser; explored the interior of every bureau drawer large enough to hide a bomb; had examined an empty trunk and a big shoe box, opened half a dozen big hat-boxes, and had practically gone through every part of the three rooms, including the bath, without finding the faintest clew. Suddenly Maxine stopped and consulted his watch.

"We must hurry, Montague," he said. "We may have to go through the whole house. I thought perhaps we'd find it here, but——"

"It isn't here," I said, anxious to withdraw for the sake of Miss Seldon, whose feelings I could easily imagine.

"It doesn't look so, Montague. Did you look under the bed?"

"No," I replied. "I didn't suppose it would be there."

"Take nothing for granted, Montague. Look under it, and then we will withdraw."

With half an apology in my eyes for the intrusion, I glanced toward Miss Seldon, and then swept the heavy lace covering of the bed back and bent over to take a swift, cursory view. Instead of withdrawing quickly, I leaned over, and suddenly dropped on my knees. With a little cry of delight and surprise, I crawled under the bed, and emerged a few seconds later with the bomb in my hands!

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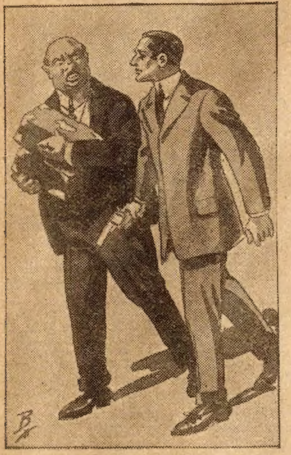

"Ah, may I trouble you Mr. Gritt?"

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE girls went into the house and the young men walked down the drive. Before they parted at the big green gate, Alexander said:

"Don't forget to keep your eye out for a spade, or whatever that argicultural implement is called. I have promised Miss Frances that I'll investigate the spot under the pear tree. She's always cleverly right," he said admiringly. "After what you told me this morning I'm quite converted to her ideas."

"I notice you've aroused her missionary effort from the first," Burroughs said dryly.

"No doubt she thought I was a heathen worthy of her salutary influences," returned the other thoughtfully.

"Perhaps there's something ahead of her missionary zeal," remarked Burroughs, pithily.

"No such luck," smiled Alexander, coloring hopefully.

"Well, hurry along," said Burroughs, "and don't forget to buy an electric torch. You'll need it tonight."

From the expression of Alexander's face Burroughs knew that some one was approaching. They parted instantly, and Burroughs, turning, wondered how much, if anything, Mr. Northrop had overheard.

He would have avoided his host, but it was too late. He distrusted him and he disliked him. All that could lie between a frank man and a crafty man, he felt divided them. And something else which was worse than all, something which haunted him continually, but which he hesitated to put into words, made him fear the thin, gaunt, eagle-eyed Northrop.

They exchanged a few commonplaces that had no bearing on the things in the minds of both.

Burroughs was enraged at his helplessness—that he had to pretend even to be civil at all. But he had no time to waste on hating Mr. Northrop just then. He was anxious to possess himself of a spade, or some likely tool. He strolled into the kitchen garden, hoping that Robert or the helper he had seen about the place lately might have left one around.

Meanwhile, the girls hurried upstairs. Before going into their room they saw Gritt emerge from the chamber at the end of the landing. There was an unusual stealthiness in his manner. He stepped softly, his face moving ferociously. The girls fled as they would have done before a plague or other deadly peril. They rushed headlong into their room, and started back in surprise to see Kate crouched behind the door.

"What do you mean by frightening me to death?" Frances said, in startled tones; but remembering that she wanted to conciliate the woman, she instantly forced a smile.

"Hush!" replied Kate, with her finger on her lip. "Robert is in the next room watching Gritt. He told me to wait in here in this room until he called me."

Frances proceeded to make the most of her opportunity.

"Kate," she began solemnly, "I want to ask you a few questions. They are very important and will not make any trouble for you. I shall pay you well and find a position for you away from here if you still wish to go, but first you must promise to tell me everything you know."

"Kate!" came a stentorian voice.

Kate trembled. "He'll kill me if I speak!" she whined.

"Kate!" reiterated the same voice, only a little surlier.

"I'm coming," faltered Kate, hurrying to the door, but Margaret held her back.

"You must return," she said firmly, "or I shall carry out my threat."

Frances snatched up a dress from the bed, and followed the woman out of the room.

"Here's the dress I promised you," she said, looking meaningly in Kate's eyes. "Go and put it on and come back, and I will show you how to alter it."

The servant hurried away, followed by Robert.

"She won't come back," said Margaret, prophetically.

"I promise you she will," returned Frances confidently. "Remember I promised her money and a chance to get away from here. Oh, yes, she'll come, but we must see that she tells us all we want to know."

A few moments later Kate returned. She entered without knocking.

"Take a peek outside to see if he followed me," she said nervously.

Frances did as directed, but Robert was nowhere in sight.

"Now, quick, Kate," said Frances, steadily. "Where are Mr. Burroughs' jewels?"

"Dick Hazelton has them," whispered the terrified woman.

The girls restrained their surprise.

"Did you give them to him?" Frances questioned energetically.

Kate's manner changed from fear to ire.

"I told you before, I'm not a thief," she answered resentfully.

"Then tell me quickly in your own way how it happened," the girl prompted.

"Dick Hazelton, the viper, offered me two hundred dollars if I would get the gems for him, but I'm an honest woman and I refused. Then he said if I left a window open so that he could get in and take them himself he would meet me down in the woods and give me a hundred dollars. I have never had a cent since I married Robert. I thought that money would give me the chance I have been waiting for to get away from him. He knows I want to go; that's why he never lets me have my wages."

"Yes, yes!" said Frances impatiently. "Why didn't the man Hazelton meet you?"

"Because, he's a thief and a rascal," said Kate, bitterly. "He came and took the things, and then left the village without seeing me. I saw a man in the woods who told me they had gone away and The Elms was closed."

"What did you do with Miss Kingsley's and my trinkets?" asked Margaret abruptly.

The woman's face flushed angrily.

"If you accuse me again of stealing," she flared indignantly, "I'll shut up and leave this room without telling you another word. You may stare; I mean it."

"Then tell us who did take it, Kate," Frances said quietly.

"I didn't know you had any. Nor I didn't know you had lost any," replied the servant, doggedly. "Why didn't you say so before?"

"Where is Mrs. Northrop's silver?" Margaret said, changing her tactics.

The woman's face turned a deathly pallor.

"My God, I don't know!" she cried in terrified accents.

"Hush!" said Frances, in thrilling tones, realizing how serious it would be for Robert to overhear,

"Margaret," she said, raising her voice, "bring me some pins. Have you a sewing machine, Kate? You'll need one for these alterations."

Meanwhile, Margaret had opened their door and looked out. It was a false alarm. Nobody was in sight.

"What is buried under the pear tree down by the stone fence?" Margaret asked.

"I don't know," whispered Kate, superstitiously. "It curdles my blood to think about it."

"Why did you scream that night when Robert made you sing?" Frances went on perseveringly, putting questions at random as they came to her.

"Some one came in the kitchen with felt slippers and frightened me nearly to death," the woman said tremblingly.

"Who was it?" asked both girls at once.

"Mr. Northrop," she murmured awesomely.

"But I thought he was two hundred and fifty miles away that night," said Margaret, looking at her doubtfully.

"So did I," declared Kate. "That's why I was so frightened."

"Then he was in the house the night of the robbery," suggested Frances, trying to conceal the new suspicions assailing her.

Kate nodded her head. "He never went away," she vowed.

"He occupied the room at the end of the landing," said Margaret, excitedly, "and had lamb chops for breakfast."

Kate confirmed their deductions.

For a moment the girls stared at each other in mystified wonder. How well they remembered Brewster sniffing outside that door; then Alexander's belief that there was another man in the house; the creature who had fled up the stairs at the young man's approach; and the tall, thin man disappearing around the corner of the house earlier in the evening were all explained.

But why should he be in the house unknown to his boarders? They thought they could understand the man wanting to make some one responsible for his losses, but he could not have foreseen the burglary and gone away to make them accountable.

It was all fearfully and wonderfully mysterious. They wanted to think it over carefully before going any farther.

"I believe you have told the truth, Kate," Frances said slowly. "Now go back to your duties, and return just before dinner. I shall want to talk to you again. Yes, yes," as the woman started to speak. "We won't run away like Hazelton. You shall have enough to leave Robert if you want to, and money to spare."

"This is my last chance," replied Kate, dolefully. "If you go back on me, Robert will kill me, unless I cheat him by committing suicide."

"Why doesn't he want you to leave him?" asked Margaret, before letting the woman go.

"He's afraid of me, afraid of what I could tell," she answered shrewdly.

"There, go now," Frances said hurriedly. "Don't forget to come back before dinner."

When the servant had left the room she threw herself into a comfortable chair.

"Oh," she exclaimed faintly, "I was on the verge of collapse. If she had stayed another moment I should have given vent to my feelings in wild whoops and yells."

"I feel as if I am passing away," replied Margaret, weakly. "Suppose we start down the lane to meet Mr. Alexander. It will be a safe place to tell him our discoveries."

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THEIR way out of the house the girls looked eagerly around for Burroughs. They could scarcely restrain their anxiety to tell him about the knavery of Dick Hazelton. But Burroughs was nowhere around, and they concluded that he had gone to meet Alexander. They walked leisurely until they were out of view of the house, then they quickened their steps down the lane toward the village.

After walking over a mile without seeing either of the young men, Margaret consulted her watch and was surprised at the lateness of the hour. Their interview with Kate had taken longer than they imagined. Alexander had been gone long enough to have returned before they left the house. Provoked at their own stupidity, they hurried back to Shady Hollow.

Frances passed the young men's room and looked in, while Margaret strolled carelessly around the garden, peeping surreptitiously into likely places, but nowhere could they find any trace of their friends.

Frances joined Margaret and they walked down the rose path. In the middle of the walk they stopped, presumably to admire the flowers.

"Where can they be?" said Frances perplexedly. "I wanted to talk with them before I see Kate again. Isn't it tantalizing?"

Margaret agreed that it was. She also reminded her friend that the young men must have had some good reason for their absence in the present development of their investigations. Besides, they did not know that she had such important information. But when the dinner bell rang two hours later, and the girls confronted each other in their room, each read alarm in the other's face.

The meal passed silently. Mr. Northrop as usual was taciturn. Mrs. Northrop made no attempt at entertaining, but on the contrary, she maintained a rude silence throughout the dinner.

Sandon Gritt never talked at the table. That night he took advantage of the absence of the young men to devour twice as much food as usual. The war he waged on his plate with the knife and fork, and the smacking of his lips were the only sounds. Robert moved around

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the room like a phantom. Not one face showed surprise or concern about Burroughs and Alexander.

The girls made a brave attempt to appear unconcerned, but they ate little and were the first to leave the table. In spite of Margaret's lectures to Frances on falling in love with Alexander, before half the dinner was over Frances had guessed Margaret' secret regard for Burroughs.

They had barely reached their room, and had had no time to mention their fears, before they felt rather than heard stealthy footsteps on the landing. They could scarcely suppress an exclamation of joy as Burroughs and Alexander, without shoes, stepped softly into their apartment.

"Oh, quick, Frances!" said Margaret, excitedly. "Tell them what we have found out before we are interrupted."

"Never mind what you have discovered," whispered Alexander, laughingly; "we can go you one better when it comes to surprises. Go ahead, Miss Kingsley."

Frances told hurriedly of her talk with Kate and all that she had learned. She added that Kate knew more and was willing to tell when the time came.

Instead of looking anxious, as the girls expected they would, the young men, especially Burroughs, smiled easily and listened patiently for the girl to finish speaking. Then they began to break their news gently.

"Kate has said her last word on the subject," Burroughs said gravely. "She's gone away. We packed her off half an hour ago."

"Gone?" echoed Frances aghast. "Oh, how could you? We need her so much."

"Don't be alarmed. She has told us everything," said Alexander, quickly, seeing the real distress of the girls.

Then he told in as few words as possible that Burroughs had succeeded in finding a spade, and after hiding it had gone to meet him, Alexander. It had suddenly occurred to them that the dinner hour was the only time when they could feel sure of the whereabouts of Sandon Gritt and the rest of the household. So they decided to stay away from dinner and search the spot under the pear tree without fear of interruption.

When they approached the tree they found Kate industriously digging. In her terror at being discovered she would have fled, but the young men prevented her. She had then told them the same story she had told the girls, adding her suspicions of the contents of the hole at the end of the rose path.

She said she was making a search in order to tell the young ladies what she had unearthed. The men believed her, and they dug until they came to a buried box.

Frances' and Margaret's faces were a study in suppressed excitement.

"Hurry up!" faltered Frances. "What was in the box?"

"Mr. Northrop's plate, which he collected during his career as a detective. I believe that among certain sleuths it is considered good form to share the swag upon the rare occasions they capture a thief. Mr. Northrop's store speaks well for his ability as a Sherlock Holmes."

"Mr. Alexander, how can you say such dreadful things?" interrupted Margaret.

"It's quite true, Miss Bellairs," confirmed Burroughs. "We learned all this from Kate. Is it any wonder the poor wretch wanted to take the next train to get away from here?"

"Oh, please go on, Mr. Alexander!" Frances urged.

"Well, nestling in one corner of the box was a smaller case," went on Alexander, "and in that case were some lovely jewels. You [illegible] identify them shortly. In another corner we found Burroughs' gems intact."

"And Dick Hazelton didn't get them, after all?" gasped the girls, in the same breath.

"Not a bit of it," laughed Burroughs. "Evidently Robert or Mr. Northrop got there first."

"I hear footsteps. Where's the jewelry now?" cried Frances, sharply. "Hurry! Quick!"

The men rushed soft-footed to their room. They were just in time to surprise Sandon Gritt, who had discovered their gems and was about to make the most of his find

"Ah, may I trouble you, Mr. Gritt?" said Burroughs, in silkily smooth tones, as if he were asking him to pass the olives.

Gritt stared savagely and was about to rush past them when Alexander drew something from his pocket. The rascal recognized the familiar glitter. With a muttered oath he thrust the jewel-cases into Burroughs' extended hand.

"So much obliged," said that young man, easily, with a tantalizing grin

"So you were getting ready to double-cross your trusting confederate," said Alexander, sarcastically. "I am going to tell the ex-detective, Mr. Northrop, that his experience with professional cracksmen should have warned him against choosing one for an accomplice."

Gritt growled imprecations and glared [illegible].

"Save your [illegible]," [illegible] Alexander, [illegible] "You [illegible] all for yourself when you [illegible] how easily you could have got the better of [illegible] if you had only acted a little sooner—"

When the friends entered the dining-room a few moments later they found Mr. Northrop alone. Their manner alarmed him. His face grayed to a horrid pallor and twitched; he rose to his feet and leaned one hand on the table.

"Important business calls us away, Mr. Northrop. We wish to leave here at [illegible]," began Alexander, in curious tones.

"Well," answered the older man guardedly.

"We understood from Mr. Gritt there might be conditions to our going," went on the young man formally.

Mr. Northrop looked up slowly and said half-stupidly, "What are you going to do about my loss?"

"Oh, we have thought of that," said Alexander, considerately. "We intend to return it to you as good as ever, only a little more tarnished than when you saw it last."

"It will keep Robert busy for a little," interjected Burroughs, opening the door and exposing the servant white-faced at the keyhole.

Mr. Northup gulped and gazed in a fascinated way at the men as they talked. Alexander explained in a few terse words what he had found under the pear tree and what Kate had told him, but the man made no answer. His mouth was dry and he could not summon up a word as the other hurried on

"So you see, Mr. Northrop," said Burroughs, while Alexander paused for breath, "we know you, and also where you got your precious family plate. We are willing to forego the pleasure of having you punished for robbery and attempted blackmail, to avoid publicity. If any one of our names ever passes your lips and we hear of it, your entire household will be promptly placed under arrest. You know best what that will mean. Let me add that I suspected you from the first as the man who entered my room, but I gave you the benefit of the doubt which was more than you deserved."

Robert frowned ominously when they told him that Kate had gone away, but his mouth watered enviously when he heard that she had plenty of money to make her independent of him. He fairly groaned when Alexander said that she was to have more whenever she came to ask for it.

The young men gazed contemptuously at the cringing cowards. Robert wrung his hands in envious hatred of Kate, and Mr. Northrop shriveled into a crumpled heap in his chair. They never knew just how much Mrs. Northrop had to do with her husband's treachery, but they did not doubt that she was an active partner.

* * * * *

The new moon was veiled in a tender light of obscuring clouds as the four friends motored to the village station. Burroughs, guiding the machine with studied ease, stole furtive glances at Margaret. Alexander and Frances in the back seat chatted meaninglessly, as people will when they are about to part.

"You're sure you don't mind traveling alone?" he asked solicitously. "Too bad Burroughs has to see Doctor Marshall again."

"Oh, don't mind us! We shall do very well," replied Frances, hastily. "I do hope you'll find the hotel habitable."

"It's been an exciting rest cure for you," Alexander said, after a moment's silence, "but the last two weeks have been the happiest in my life. I'm awfully in the dumps at losing you."

"Losing me?" she said interrogatively. "Why do you want to lose me?"

"I don't," he said quickly. "If I thought you would let me call when I get to the city——"

"Of course you are going to call," she said promptly, coloring beautifully.

All at once their attention was directed to an approaching automobile. It was a lead-colored craft with a wicked, raking running board that made it look like a torpedo destroyer. The machine acted fiendishly. It made no attempt to slacken speed or move aside. When it was quite close it made a fearful lunge at the limousine.

The girls screamed, and by a miracle and Burroughs' promptness in turning aside, a calamity was obviated. The young men recognized in the dare-devil driver the bold features of Dick Hazelton.

"That was done with the deliberate intention of upsetting us," said Burroughs, quietly.

They all agreed, and it made them thoughtful for the rest of the way to the station.

Burroughs had not made as much progress with Margaret as Alexander had with Frances, but before she went away, he clung significantly to her hand stretched from the car window. He ran along by the train, and whispered in low tones that this was not the end.

Before she could reply or chide him she had got beyond the platform, but she looked back, and his doleful face as he stood there so melancholy, haunted her until his words later came true.

The End.

* * *

He Surrendered.

In civilian clothes General Miles does not look particularly warlike, in spite of the fact that he has seen a good deal of fighting in his time. And thereby hangs a story that has never been told before in print. Not long ago General Miles was seated in the smoking compartment of a Pullman car when a large, imposing-looking man stepped inside, nodded familiarly to the General, lighted a cigar, and began to chat. Pretty soon the stranger brought up the subject of the Spanish-American War. "Were you in it?" asked the General.

"I certainly was," answered the stranger, briskly. "Right in the thick of it. My business, you know. I am an army officer. Am in the cavalry, in the First Regiment of Cavalry, you know. Am a [illegible]."

"Say," said General Miles, "I've always wanted to meet an army officer. Tell me something about the service and its men. Now in the cavalry they ride around on horses, or shoot big guns, or something like that, don't they?"

"Yes, something like that," replied the stranger. "It's pretty hard for us officers to explain it all to a citizen who doesn't know anything about it. You see, the cavalry is mounted—in time of war. In time of peace it isn't."

The General was unable to control himself any longer. "You don't know an army from a piece of pie. It's against the law for a man to impersonate an army officer, and I want you to know right here and now that I was an officer in the Civil War and in the Spanish-American War."

"I know it," said the stranger, calmly. "I run a barber shop in New York and have shaved you a good many times."

General Miles reached over and touched the electric button.

"Bring fresh cigars," he said to the porter.

* * *

She Was Puzzled.

Head Coach Howe told at the Yale training table a football story.

"The English," he began, "are crazier over football than we are. Why, there will sometimes be nearly 100,000 English at a single football game.

"Two Englishwomen of the lower class were drinking 'four-ale' in a 'pub' one afternoon.

"'What's the matter with 'ee, Bess?' said the first woman.

"'Ah'm puzzled,' said the second.

"'What about, Bess?'

"'Well, ye see, my Garge's on the football team, an' when the team wins he treats me to fried fish an' the movies, but when it loses he gies me a beatin' up.'

"'Well, Bess, I know all about that. But what's puzzlin' thee? That's what I asked.'

"'Well, ye see, today's match ended in a draw.'"

* * *

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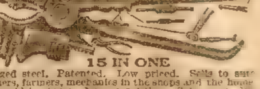

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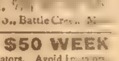

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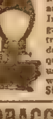

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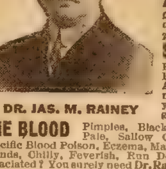

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IMPROVED FORMULA
BRING VITALITY STRENGTH VIGOR CURE STOMACH BLOOD AND
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NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

Papa's Job.

"What is Billy Hardatit doing these days?" asked Smithers.

"Oh, he's working his son's way through college," said little Binks.

Had Her Own Name for Them.

The Actor—"I suppose you have special terms for actors?"

Mrs. Boardem—"Yes, sir. But I'm too much of a lady to use 'em."

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

Merely a Pedestrian's View.

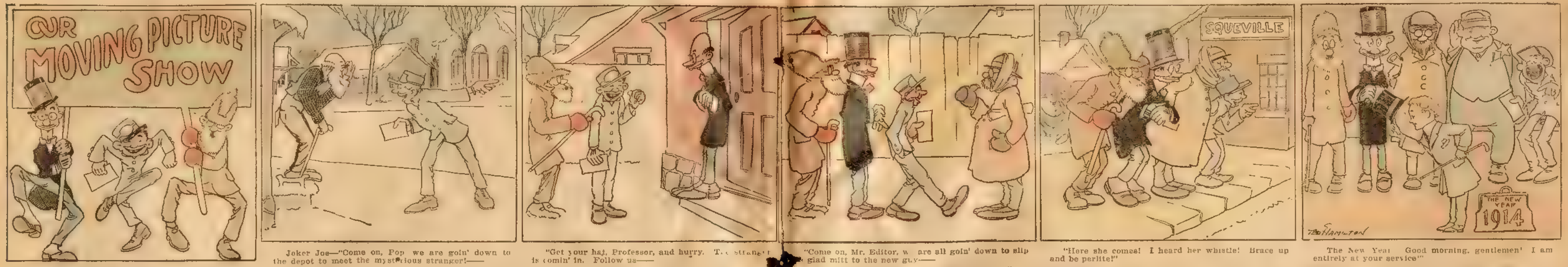
"Forty miles an hour is fast enough for any man to drive."

"Humph! It's a cinch you don't own an auto."

Gas Mathematics.

Johnny—"And does the gas meter measure the quantity of gas you use?"

Papa—"No, my son—the quantity you have to pay for."—Puck



Joker Joe—"Come on, Pop, we are goin' down to the depot to meet the mysterious stranger!——

"Get your hat, Professor, and hurry. The stranger is comin' in. Follow us——

"Come on, Mr. Editor, we are all goin' down to slip glad mitt to the new guy——

"Here she comes! I heard her whistle! Brace up and be perlite!"

The New Year—"Good morning, gentlemen! I am entirely at your service!"

A Great Bargain.

Mrs. Breen had talked enthusiastically of the largely advertised fire sale which was to take place in one of the uptown department stores. That evening when her husband came home he looked about at a number of bundles which were lying on a table.

"Well, Mabel, what did you find at that wonderful fire sale?" he inquired.

"Oh, Will, I got some of the loveliest silk stockings at twenty-four cents a pair! There isn't a thing the matter with them, except that the feet are burned off."

Absent-minded.

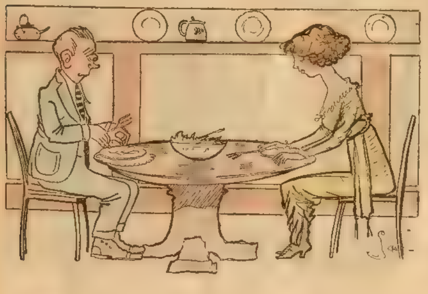
The story is told of a college professor, who was noted for his concentration of mind.

The professor was returning home one night from a scientific meeting still pondering over the subject. He had reached his room in safety, when he heard a noise which seemed to come from under the bed.

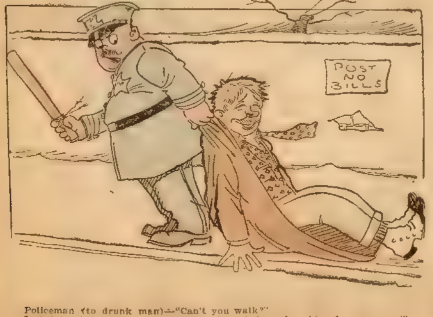
"Is some one there?" he asked.

"No, Professor," answered the intruder, who knew the professor's peculiarities.

"That's strange. I was positive some one was under my bed," commented the learned man.—Judge's Library



Husband—"This salad has a dreadful taste! Didn't you wash it?"
Young Wife—"Of course, dear!—In fact, I used soap!"



Policeman (to drunk man)—"Can't you walk?"
Inebriate—"Shertainly, but you're paid a shalary for—hic—dragging me!"

The Opening.

An air of assurance distinguished the jaunty young man who had appeared in answer to an advertisement for a clerk, but his manner did not commend him to the leather merchant.

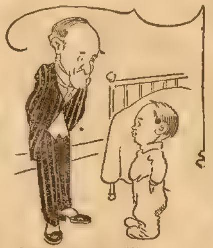
"Is there a good opening here for a young man who keeps his wits about him and does not care to begin at the bottom of the ladder?" asked the applicant before the merchant had an opportunity to speak.

"Yes," he replied, after a comprehensive survey of his jaunty visitor, "there is. A thoughtful carpenter, foreseeing the appearance of just such a young man, provided a good opening in the middle of that left-hand wall. Kindly make use of it."

You Never Can Tell.

An old woman who persisted in bowing during church service whenever the name of Satan was mentioned was reprimanded by the minister for so unseemly a habit. The reproof had, however, no effect, and the minister asked her finally, in exasperation, why she thought it necessary to bow.

"Well," she replied, "civility costs nothing and you never know what will happen."



"Paw, what's a pretzel?"
"A cracker with the cramps, my son. Now go to bed."

She Kept Servants.

Daughter—"We have made the greatest mistake. That new neighbor doesn't do her own housework at all. She has servants."

Mrs. de Style—"I never see them."

Daughter—"No, nor I; but she came into the drug store while I was there and asked for something to mend china."

He Lost Flesh.

Mr. Weighbigg—"Doctor, your antifat remedies are doing me a great deal of good. I'm losing flesh right along. But, seems to me, your charges are ruinously high."

Doctor (calmly)—"That's part of the treatment."

Why They Changed Their Minds.

Dibbs—"Going to marry! Why, I thought you intended to remain single."

Gibbs—"Well, I did; but I met a young woman who had decided to remain single, also, and, finding such harmony of disposition in each other, we determined to get married."

No Need for Economy.

Little Agnes between her fifth and sixth birthdays developed a great fondness for milk. Visiting a rural aunt, she drank so much that the old lady, for safety's sake, felt bound to remonstrate. Agnes misunderstood the grounds for the remonstrance.

"I shouldn't think you'd be stingy with milk, auntie," she murmured, "when there's two whole cowsful."

Her First Picture.

Mr. Wayback—"Great Scott! What you got the hired man plowin' up the front yard for?"

Mrs. Wayback—"Our darter says the first pictur' she takes with her new camera will be the house, and her book of instructions says she must break up the foreground, but, of course, she can't do that herself."

Up.

"Pallet tells me his work has been hung on the line."

"So has his wife's."

"Does she paint, too?"

"No: she takes in washing."

Literally.

"Mr. Henpeck and his wife had a fight over his coming into the house with his feet muddy."

"How did it end?"

"He went to the mat."

Could Be of Assistance.

J[illegible]—"Say, Fred, old boy, I'm looking for some friend who will loan me ten dollars. Come now, can't you be of assistance?"

Fred—"Certainly."

"Thank you ever so much."

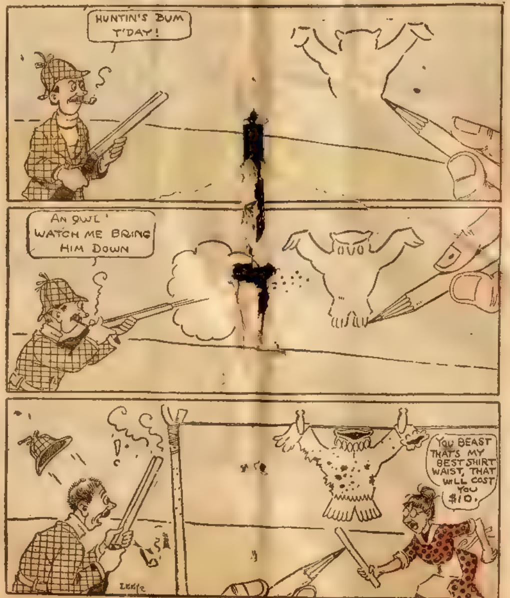
"Yes, it's going to rain, and if you'll step over to my office, I'll lend you one of your umbrellas so you won't get wet while you're looking."

A Lucky Hearse.

One of Lord Charles Beresford's tenants who conducted a small undertaker's establishment in Waterford, Ireland, was one day asked how the business was getting along.

"Grand, me lord!" he exclaimed. "I now have the luckiest hearse you ever saw. Glory be to goodness, it has never been a day idle since I got it."

ARTIST FOOLINGS


HUNTIN'S BUM T'DAY!
AN OWL! WATCH ME BRING HIM DOWN
YOU BEAST THAT'S MY BEST SHIRT WAIST, THAT WILL COST YOU $10.

A Small Audience.

The story of a minister who drove in a cab to a seamen's chapel to preach was told by the Reverend Silas K. Hocking at a meeting of the Seamen's Christian Friends Society.

On arriving at the place of worship the minister was somewhat disconcerted to find that the congregation consisted of only one man. Remembering that a well-known minister had on one occasion preached to one man and converted him, he decided to go ahead.

At the close of a good and long sermon he shook hands with his "congregation" and asked him if the sermon had been too long.

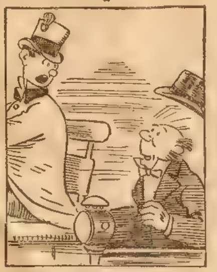
"Oh, it makes no difference to me," was the reply. "I am your cabman."

Watered Stock.

A milkman in a country town not far from New York was brought before the local court to answer a charge of adulteration of milk.

"You are charged," said the judge, "with a most serious offense—of selling adulterated milk. Have you anything to say in answer to the charge?"

"Well, your honor," answered the milkman, "the night before it was raining very hard, and the only cause I can give is the cow must have got wet through."



Coachman—"The horses are running away and I can't stop them."
Mr. Stingiman—"You can't? Well, be careful to run into something cheap!"

A Funeral in Sections.

A well-known local character of Townsend, Montana, lost a leg in a switching yard on the railroad.

The railroad boys raised a little purse for the victim, who was rather down on his luck in other ways aside from the accident. After paying his board and hospital bills, he went down and bought a coffin and a lot in the cemetery, and had his amputated leg buried in good style.

"Now," he said, "when I cash in all they will have to do will be to dig up the coffin and put me in with the leg."

An Economical Wife.

He—"I can't send my clothes to the tailor's every time they need a button. We must economize. Can't you sew on these suspender buttons yourself?"

She—"Here, my dear; fasten them up with a hairpin. That will save thread, you know."

A Great Field.

"I'd like to open a singing school," said the young lady with the squeaky voice, as she stepped from the train at B[illegible]. "Do you think there is a large field in this community?"

"Yessum," drawled the rude farmer on the platform, "thar be a field forty acres wide back o' the brick-kilns, an' nothin' you could disturb but rabbits and worms."

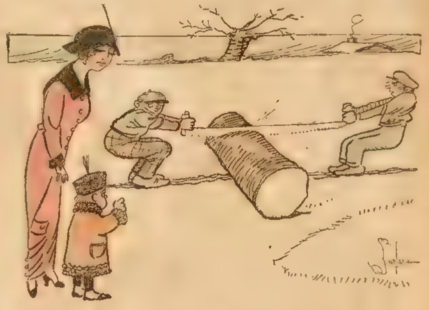
Too Much for Him.

Publisher—"What's the matter? You look ill?"

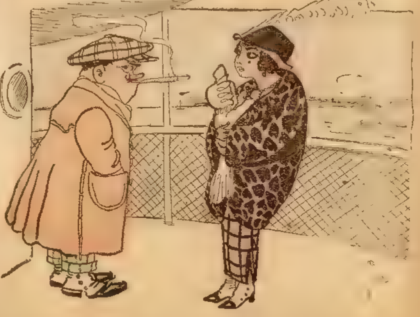
Book Agent—"I've come to resign. Can't stand this job any longer. I don't want to be talked to death."

"Eh? What's happened?"

"Every customer I struck today had just returned from Europe, and was slopping over with descriptions of what they had seen on the other side."



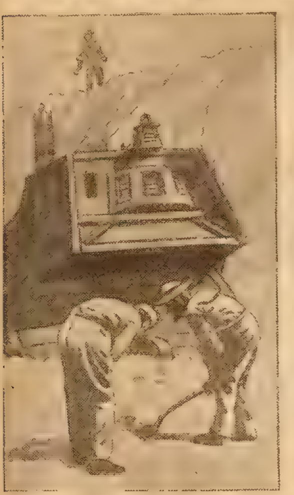
Edwin—"Oh, mother, look at those naughty men quarreling. Why don't the big man let the little one have it?"



Crookleigh (to his wife as the steamer from Paris sights Staten Island)—"Now, Marie, give the baby the pearl necklace and let him swallow it!"

The Invisible Captain

Or, Hunting Sea Treasure -:- By William H. Manning



We found the wreck of the galleon.

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CHAPTER XIV.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

THERE could be no doubt about it. He was only a few feet [illegible], and the light was strong enough for all our purposes. Captain Varion was there, alive and, as far as could be seen, well. And his associates were men of the West Indies, the two now at his side being full-blooded negroes.

"Mr. Chardon!"

Varion spoke my name in his usual mildly commanding way, and the force of habit was so strong that I nearly replied before prudence checked me. Somebody else did reply. One of the black men promptly gave attention.

"Yes, sah?" he questioned.

"And you, Mr. Taintor. Come nearer!"

The three moved until their elbows almost touched. One had accepted the name of Chardon, and the other that of Taintor, and I was in the throes of bewilderment.

"It is going to be a long task to uncover the old galleon and get the treasure," Varion pursued, "and I think something else should precede our digging. That schooner in the offing—the Sally of Salem, I think you said her name was—must be got out of the way. I have flung my warning to her deck, but I fear she will not go. She is likely to dispute possession of the treasure with us. Now, what is to be done?"

"Drift a raft down under her hull with gunpowder on board and blow her into pieces!" suggested the fellow who was addressed as Chardon.

"You forget that my niece, Miss Selma Lawrence, is a prisoner in the ship, together with a female friend of hers. Poor Selma! Hers is a hard lot, captive among those knaves. I tell you what it is, Chardon, we must rescue her somehow, but how? She is with a desperate gang."

"Get Cap'n Titilo of the black schooner to attack them," suggested the colored "Taintor."

"No, no!" Varion protested. "I am in terror of that dreadful pirate. I've heard a good deal about him while sailing along the West Indies in previous years. Why, I've heard so much that the password of his crew—'Bethulda'—often rings in my ears when I dream."

"But you say," answered the black Chardon, "that the men who have your niece are also pirates."

"Yes," Varion admitted, sighing. "The captain of the ship is one Captain Kidd, a noted buccaneer, and his mate is a former captain called Morgan—a savage pair. Still, they are better class than the crew of the black schooner. Again, I would like to save the ship. The Sally of Salem was once an honest vessel, a peaceful merchantman. How Kidd and Morgan captured her I don't know but it is sad to know she is now a full-fledged pirate craft."

Jim Hoglock touched my arm.

"Captain Varion is crazy as a bedbug!" he whispered.

His assertion was not needed to make that fact plain to me. Everything the skipper had said tended one way, and a part of his mysterious course was clear. Deranged, he imagined that one of his negro companions was myself, and the other, meek Mr. Taintor.

Thus far the speaker had been calm and sad, but his manner took on a tinge of excitement more suitable to his condition

"It was nothing but the mercy of Providence that enabled me to escape from that dreadful ship!" he declared. "When I lowered myself into the water, equipped with nothing but a rude, self-made contrivance for keeping me afloat, the outlook was dark enough, but you picked me up, Chardon—by the way, I don't clearly remember how you happened to be near at that time."

"We were on a pleasure cruise," explained the black man

"Oh, yes, yes! I recall that fact now. And we have chased the Sally ever since, and tossed letters to her deck when the darkness was great enough to let us slip along close to her hull, unseen by them. Well, well, Chardon, back to the drogher, and we will consider our new plans in the cabin. I am in haste to get the money to Salem. There is practically no treasure in the water, so the bulk of it must be right here, in a shallow layer of earth. We must dig for it, but lack of spades in sufficient numbers to do good work——"

I lost the rest. He had turned and walked toward the boat. Entering, he and his negro associates pulled back to the vessel

"Mad as a March hare!" muttered Hoglock.

"Yes, we know now what's wrong with Captain Varion."

"So he dropped himself clear of the Sally and was picked up by his new mates. That's his mysterious disappearance from our ship."

"Yes. Jim, just what are his present mates?"

"Pirates, sure!"

"I doubt it. They may be lawless enough in a way, for one of them suggested blowing the Sally up with powder, but they impress me as being less villainous than the crew of the black schooner we fought. So her captain is called Titilo, and their password is 'Bethulda'? I only hope we shall see no more of that gang. Bos'n, I have just missed a point."

"How so, sir?"

"Only two men were with our unfortunate skipper. We should have rushed upon them and rescued Varion."

"Don't get that idea into your head, Mr. Chardon. Varion would have resisted, and before we could have got to the rest of our party the whole lot of the pirates would have been at our heels, butchering us at their leisure."

"You may be right. Anyhow, our chance has passed us by and the Captain is still a prisoner——"

"His own prisoner, not theirs, for he wants to be there," Jim quickly interrupted.

"Admitted. Well, we can do no more now, and a council is imperatively necessary. We will return to the Sally and put the matter up to all hands. Varion's companions outnumber us, and yet my idea is to attack them in force at once. If we delay we surely lose the treasure, and what is more important, I think we shall lose our lives."

"Ay, ay, sir. Your way is best—back to the Sally!"

We went. Picking up our shipmates on the ridge we returned to our ship as speedily as possible. Five minutes later the cabin was the scene of a new consultation with the passengers, the two mates, the bos'n, and myself participating. The situation was clearly laid before those who had remained behind.

We knew where our captain was, and possibly knew the location of the treasure. What was to be done?

"Attack!" said Torbett, impetuously, and I noticed that as Jim Hoglock looked at him the bos'n's old hostility no longer showed.

Moderate Taintor was the only man who counseled a waiting game, but Selma was grave and doubtful.

"If you make direct attack some one may be killed," she suggested.

"Your uncle will surely be killed if left with those men. I heard him announce his intention of taking the treasure to Salem. He will never be allowed to do that. For now he is useful, but let the money be discovered, and his men will murder him and seize all of it."

"I see!" she exclaimed. "I will oppose you no longer. Do what you think best."

"Mr. Chardon," said the bos'n, "I read the name on that drogher they have. It was El Gorrion. Isn't it possible that the native we picked up from the log will know just what she is?"

"Good!" I commented, "Bring Zozotil here."

Jim went, and Torbett smiled upon me in [illegible] amusement.

"So Varion thinks you are Captain Kidd and Mr. Taintor the notorious Morgan!" he said banteringly. "Rather a distinguished party we have here. Poor Varion!"

Torbett no longer seemed so obnoxious to me as formerly, but I let this talk pass without answer. The bos'n was soon back

"Zozotil is nowhere to be found," he reported. "He's not in this ship."

"Deserted, it seems," I replied, with small interest. "Well, if we are of one mind there is no call for delay. Mr. Taintor, I shall leave you in charge of the ship with a few men, but all others we shall need for the attack. It must be sudden and irresistible——"

The steward came hurrying down the companion, from which point he burst into the cabin with his eyes wide and excitement in his manner.

"Sir," he announced, "a strange ship has just come to in the near offing. We are afraid it is the black schooner!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE FINAL ATTACK.

I HASTENED from the cabin, questioning as I went. The steward explained that the strange sail had approached very quietly and without a light on deck, so he was only a few fathoms distant from the Sally of Salem when he came to and discovery was made.

"It's so mighty dark we can't be sure of anything, but we do feel scared lest it is that black schooner."

The words drilled into my mind in a way, but when I was on deck I forgot all except matters outboard. I could dimly see the bulk of the stranger, and was about to summon my men to quarters when a hail sounded from the water.

"Ship ahoy!"

It was a good English voice, and I lost a little of my apprehension It was worth while to wait before starting hostilities

"Ahoy!" I replied, trying to make out the boat I knew must be there. "Who are you?"

"Schooner Bonny Dundee from Gulliver's Key, and I'm Dick Knart, owner and captain. If, as I think, you are an honest vessel, it may be of mutual benefit if we have a talk. Shall I come on board?"

I had not forgotten what Ithamar Hitt had told me about Dick Knart, the trader, and as I understood he was a power in the West Indies, I did not hesitate.

"Come ahead, Captain Knart. You'll be welcome."

We heard the sound of oars, and presently a boat emerged from the darkness with four men pulling and one sitting idle. A few moments later the latter was on board, and after brief words with him I conducted him below. There, seen in light, he proved to be a tall, bearded, athletic man, with a skin as white as tan had left it and a pronounced Scotch burr. He shook hands all around with easy composure, and then, declining a seat, came to business with striking directness.

"My men and I have just fought Captain Titilo of a certain piratical black schooner that has been too lawless to suit decent men in this region. Schooner and crew are at the bottom of the ocean but I have many wounded, so many I can not accommodate them well until we reach Gulliver's Key. If you will take a few of them I will say, for your benefit, that there is a Yankee skipper in bad company near here, and if you are his countrymen you may be interested to know it and join forces with me to get him clear."

I was about to speak, but he went on steadily.

"He is in a drogher called El Gorrion. Her crew are riffraff—not open pirates, but scum that will cut a throat cheerfully if they can gain by it. Now tell me who you are, and let's see if we can join hands for a while."

He stood among us a stranger, trusting to his own ability to reap no harm by so doing—a man of power so inborn and complete that he was a host in himself. Moreover, he had such an air of honesty that he had us won from the start.

Speaking swiftly I had told our story in ten minutes, and when it was done he came quietly but resistlessly to the front

"We must move upon them at once!" he declared. "We will seize the whole lot—unless they have taken alarm and made off. Get your men, Chardon, and I'll get mine."

His plan was mine, too, but when we were parting on deck I made a suggestion.

"Would it not be well to send a boat around the point of El Brazo to cut them off if they try to escape?"

"Already done, friend," he returned easily. "My quarter boat has gone packed with men. When we signal from the ridge they will close in from the east side."

In due time we landed, marched to the summit of the second ridge, and had the native position before us. Just how it

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happened was never known, but the men had somehow received warning and were trying to flee rushing about in confusion and uttering shrill cries like frightened fowls.

We swept down upon them, and our numbers were such that we might have butchered the whole lot, but that was not Dick Knart's way when he had anything less than pirates to deal with. Announcing his identity in far-carrying voice, he demanded their surrender, and as his boat was closing in from the seaward side, they had no choice. They yielded without firing a shot.

Perhaps all would not have gone well with them had we stayed away, for when we boarded their vessel we found Zozotil there He had slipped away from the Sally, swum to the drogher, and, in their lack of attention, had scuttled her scientifically. Although, as things turned, he did no good he proved that his heart was in the right place.

Captain Varion was recovered from the company of natives unharmed. He failed to recognize any of us, but conducted himself with stately dignity, asserting that he yielded under protest, and should appeal to the President to have us punished.

Knart left a guard on El Brazo to watch over the prisoners until such time as he saw fit to turn them loose, and the men of the Sally escorted their afflicted captain back to his own vessel. He met Selma's enthusiastic greeting with the [illegible] dignity, but was fairly affectionate

"Be as composed as possible, my child," he directed. "I trust we shall escape from the power of these freebooters. Sir..." and here he turned upon me, "may I ask if ransom for myself and the ladies will be accepted?"

"Gladly, sir," I answered.

"Thank you, Captain Kidd!" he added, bowing

Torbett grinned unpleasantly

"Well said, Captain Kidd!" he mocked.

This turned Varion's eyes upon the passenger, and he looked hard.

"This man," he pursued, "is clearly not a sailor. I would like to engage him for my servant, though he does not look intelligent enough to be very competent."

After that shot, as telling as it was innocent, I did not feel that I owed Torbett any grudge.

We did our best to bring Varion to a realizing sense of actual conditions, but we failed. He recognized only Selma, and persisted in his delusions.

The next day I saw the captain of El Gorrion and gained what information I could. They had picked Varion up at sea, clinging to a self-made life-preserver, and with his delusions in full sway. He said he had escaped from a pirate ship by lowering himself softly from its deck, and as he claimed to be very wealthy, they had received him and treated him well, placing the drogher at his disposal.

He wanted opportunity to cast messages to our deck, and they enabled him to do this, using scraps of zinc and old paper they had on board. All letters were delivered when darkness was great by coming near in their boat, with sails set, and then making the cast. Night and luck enabled them to escape being seen by the Sally's lookouts.

How the first message came under the [illegible] table was never known, but we studied it out that it had dropped down the companion when cast from the boat, and then, possibly, one of our party had half-stumbled over it when the light was turned low, and, annoyed, had given it a kick that sent it to the table, and forgotten the seemingly trifling matter.

When the man at the wheel declared that second letter, which struck him in the head, had come from the companionway he was simply mistaken. And Captain Varion had surely written all the messages on zinc.

The fact that his first two letters had been friendly and the last hostile had to be attributed to his mental derangement, like other things he had said and done. His persistence in writing "When in doubt consult Torbett" was a vagary that was never explained, but which had no basis of importance.

The captain of El Gorrion explained that Varion had told him of the treasure, and, now that his fangs were rendered helpless, the native was full of softly-spoken declarations of good faith, but he had that in his barbarian eyes that told how well it was for our skipper that he had not stayed in his dubious company too long.

That was treasure day on El Brazo del Mar. We dug, and we found the wreck of the long-buried galleon, and within its decaying ribs we found the riches that had gone down with it long before—doubloons and ingots in such numbers that there was wealth for all concerned. The greater part lay about ten yards back of the water's edge.

We were never quite sure how Captain Varion had learned of it, but in later years he stated that he had touched at the island while a jury mast was being rigged after a squall, and had seen enough to guide him, after which he covered the indications with mud. Probably this was right.

"Bethulda," Dick Knart explained, was more a rallying-cry of the pirates than anything else. The pirate chief had a spectacular turn of mind, and had a device by which he used sheets of tin to light his ship by their reflection in unusual style when so inclined, as well as an illuminated sign he could hoist above his upper works with "Bethulda," as its visible part. This theatrical device was in operation when we first saw the freebooter ship.

We parted from Knart with such good will that my acquaintance with him was continued in after years, and I was more than once a guest at his home on Gulliver's Key.

Zozotil received a money gift and was left at Porto Rico. Just how much friendly consideration he deserved was uncertain. He had lied when he said he did not know what "Bethulda" meant, but explained this by expressing great fear of the pirates.

On reaching Salem we had proof that our captain's mental derangement was not of recent growth. The ships White Drift and James K. Roper had reached port ahead of us, and their captains said they had never received word to meet the Sally of Salem. This was a hallucination of our leader.

Under treatment he recovered his reason, but was never again in condition to command a ship, whereby the Sally was turned over to me, and I was her skipper for many years Most of her crew continued with me.

Torbett had proved a better man than I once thought, but he and I never could be intimate. This was why, after he married Esther, there was no great amount of cordiality between them and Selma. But then, Selma was just the person to stand loyally by her husband, who happened to be myself.

The End.

* * *

Object of Contempt.

William E. Borah, Senator from Idaho, tells this yarn:

There was at one time in Georgia a judge who had many duties beside his legal ones to perform, but who never for a moment forgot that he "embodied the law" under any and all circumstances.

On one occasion he was called upon to act as auctioneer to dispose of some merchandise left by a dry goods merchant who had died some time before.

During the auction one of the bidders created a disturbance, and finally the exasperated auctioneer, assuming his character as judge, fined the man $60 and sent him to jail for contempt of court. An attorney made an application to remit on the grounds that there had been no contempt of court. He maintained that the judge when acting as auctioneer was not a court and therefore was not liable to contempt.

The judge heard this application presented with rising wrath, and, assuming all the dignity which he possessed, he glared fiercely down upon the diminutive attorney.

"Sir," said he, in stentorian tones, "I would have you know that I am judge of this place under any and all circumstances; I am judge all the time, sir, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same! And as such," shaking a forefinger at the attorney, "as such let me tell you, sir, that I am always and everywhere an object of contempt."

* * *

The Fast Express.

It was a cruel thing to say about a nice railroad whose chief aim was the speedy transportation of its passengers, but the conversation had turned to lightning expresses, and Wallace Irwin, the author, simply could not help it.

On the road in question, as Mr. Irwin related the story, a train stopped one day and the passengers were told that a cow had got on the track, and had to be driven off.

Up the road a few miles farther the train stopped again, and once more explanation was given that a cow was on the track. Two miles, perhaps, of continuous going, and then came another stop. This time a passenger glanced wearily toward the end of the car.

"Mr. Conductor," he called out, in yawnful accents, "could I speak to you a moment?"

"Certainly," answered the conductor, moving down the aisle, "what is it?"

"Do you really mean to say," returned the passenger, in a voice that was almost a sigh, "that we have caught up to that cow again?"

* * *

Preferred Fifty.

Mr. Jenkins was talking with a young man whom he hoped might become his son-in-law. Wishing to encourage the young man, who had little of this world's goods, the old gentleman said:

"I am proud of my girls, sir, and there is nothing better than to see them married to bright, smart young men. I have made considerable money, and the girls won't go to their husbands penniless by any means. Now, there's Belle, twenty-five years old, one of the best girls in the world. I shall give her ten thousand dollars when she marries. Then next comes Caroline, who won't see thirty-five again, and I shall give her twenty-five thousand dollars. And the man who marries Delia, who is forty, will have thirty thousand dollars."

The young man reflected for a moment or so, then inquired:

"You haven't got a daughter about fifty, have you?"

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begin with a sluggish, congested or otherwise unhealthy state of one or more of the important organs of digestion and assimilation—the stomach, liver, kidneys and bowels. If taken in time you

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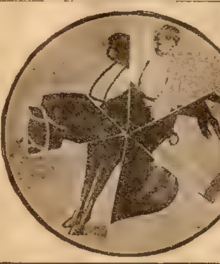

Here is your chance to get a fine Shetland Pony. Cut this picture into six pieces and paste or pin the pieces together so as to make a complete picture of a boy riding a pony. Mail it to me with your name and address and I will tell you all about the great contest in which you can win a beautiful pony.

1500 VOTES FREE

I will also send you a special coupon good for 1500 votes toward the pony. All you have to do to get this coupon is to send your name and address at once.

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Send your order today. Price list free upon request. We refer you to Stock Yards National Bank.

OSCAR BROS., Dept. 1 Kansas City, Mo.

The Crooked Man.

(Continued from page four.)

the other's steady weapon, which was pointed squarely at his breast, the big man saw something that frightened him badly. For the moment he was too scared to speak, then he attempted to bluster.

"What's this mean?" he demanded heatedly. "You're a poor joker, Kelly, if you ask me. Put that gun away before it goes off and hurts somebody."

Kelly laughed softly. "Don't be afraid," he said. "You are safe enough as long as you behave yourself, but I'll drill you mighty quick if you act up. This is no joke, Connelly."

Connelly leaned forward excitedly. The expression of fear on his face was washed out by a look of incredulous amazement. For a little he almost forgot his danger.

"Who are you?" he asked, in a tense voice. "Who the devil are you? You're not Kelly, although you look like him. It's your voice—it's changed. By heaven! I've got it. You're a fly cop!"

Wolfert smiled grimly. His impersonation of Dutch Kelly, the safe blower, had been much easier than he expected—so easy that he almost regretted being obliged to discontinue it. It was necessary, however, that he appear in his true character.

"You're right," he said, "but it doesn't make any difference who I am. We must get down to business. I want certain information, which you can give me, and I mean to have it. I've got you cornered—Trench won't be back for a while, and he can't get in when he comes unless you unlock the door—so you might as well take the easier way. You've already told me enough to put you in the pen for a few years, and you'll go there, if you don't answer my questions. What shall it be—a term in prison, or the truth?"

"I don't get you," Connelly rejoined thickly, after a moment's hesitation in which his eyes traveled hastily around the room in search of some avenue of escape. "What do you want to know?"

"The real name and the hiding-place of the Crooked Man, or the 'Chief,' as you call him!"

The conclusion of this highly interesting story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. Read it. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year.

* * *

Gently, But Firmly.

"William," said Mrs. Flint gently, but firmly, to her son-in-law of six weeks on the occasion of her first visit to his home, "I have always said that if my daughter married I would never interfere in any way in her home, and I do not mean to, because I think such interference always creates trouble; but, William, I do feel that you smoke quite too many cigars for your good.

"You smoked seven between half-past six and half-past ten last night, and not only is it unhealthful for you to smoke so many, but think of the expense of it! Then Helen tells me that you put on a clean shirt every other day, which seems to me to be wholly unnecessary, even from the point of cleanliness; and I found in the laundry hamper today three of your collars without any soil on them worth speaking of. It only makes your laundry bills larger and wears out your collars and shirts to have them laundered so often, William.

"I put those three collars back in your collar drawer of the chiffonier in your room, for there is no sense in sending them to the laundry clean as they are. Then, William, I do think that it is a good deal of an extravagance for you to pay ten cents every time you want your boots polished, when you could polish them in five minutes yourself; and have you ever thought of the great saving it would be if you bought a safety razor and shaved yourself? I saw some real nice-looking ones in a store window yesterday for only thirty-five cents, and I mean to get you one. It will save you twenty-five dollars a year. And it does seem to me, William, that you have so many more ties than you need. I counted thirty-one in your bedroom yesterday, and Helen tells me that you pay two dollars for some of your ties. I don't think that my husband ever in his life paid over seventy-five cents for a tie, and usually he pays but twenty-five cents. I can get you as good a tie as any man needs for not more than fifty cents.

"Then Helen tells me it is you who insists on having all of the food so highly seasoned. It is bad for the digestion and adds to the expense, and I think I shall have to have a talk with the cook about it. I feel sure that it is because of such highly seasoned food that you have such a lot of pimples.

"Another thing, William. Don't you think it quite extravagant to pay seventy-five cents and a dollar for your luncheon every day, as Helen tells me that you do? You know that there are so many nice lunch counters and other places where you can get all that you really need for twenty-five cents or even less. My husband often gets a good, nourishing lunch for twenty cents, and often he is not above taking his lunch from home. It would save you a lot if you did that, and bought perhaps a glass of milk to go with it.

"As I say, William, I do not want to meddle or interfere in any way; but I feel that I ought to speak about a few things that mean so much for your own good. Now that you have your Saturday afternoons off, you might cut your own grass on the lawn and— You going? My goodness! I must speak to him about slamming the door like that. It is apt to break the glass."—Judge.

* * *

Superfluous Wealth.

Woodrow Wilson, at a dinner at Spring Lake, said of the multimillionaire:

"After all, most of his wealth is superfluous. When I think of a multimillionaire's millions I am reminded of a story about Gobsa Golde.

"'I have four English man servants,' said Gobsa Golde on the terrace of his marble cottage at Newport—'four English man servants, whose sole duty it is to look after my sea bathing.'

"He cleared his throat pompously and continued:

"'The first has charge of my bathing suits, the second takes care of the bathhouses and the showers, and the third, in a small boat, acts a kind of life guard to me.'

"'But the fourth—what does the fourth do?' a listener asked.

"'Oh, he takes my bath. Sea bathing always has a depressing effect on my heart.'"

WANT ADS.

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NICKEL Plate Your Automobile Trimmings. Quick-Knick will do it, deposits a real plate, beautiful brilliant stay there plate. Beats polishing brass and it's there to stay. Write for particulars. Forest City Sales Co., Fremont, Nebr.

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AGENTS Wanted in Every Town and Village. Biggest money maker out. Perfect goggle and eye protector. Sells at sight to motorcyclists, autoists, millworkers and many others. Agents sample 25c or $2.00 dozen. Sell for [illegible]0c. Hugh E. King Sales Co., Goggle Dept., H[illegible] Bldg., Chicago.

WE Start You in Big Money-Making Business. We trust you for outfit. It coins money for you the minute you get it. 85c profit on every dollar. Circulars free. F. P. [illegible] Works, Desk 81, 2231 W. 12th Street, Chicago.

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AGENTS Make $10 a Day Selling Rugs at $1 each, cost agents 55c, size 36x68. Sell from one to six at every house; something every housewife wants. Three full size rugs for samples for $1.65. Commerce Specialty Co., Commerce, Tex.

DISTRICT Agents Are Making Big Money selling the Reliance Vacuum Cleaners. Best and neatest hand power machine sold. Write quick for particulars and territory for 1914. Reliance Specialty Co., 1754 Berteau Ave., Chicago.

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WILL Pay Reliable Man or Woman $12.50 to distribute 100 free pkgs. perfumed borax soap powder among friends. No money required. B. W. Ward and Company, 218 Institute Place, Chicago.

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$5.00 Daily Income and 6% Guaranteed Profit sharing bond to agents selling Veta products. Veta Manufacturing Co., Allentown, Pa.

DON'T Take Orders for Suits. Our Plan easier, quicker money. Samples free. Arnold, 5149 Trumbull, Chicago.

REMNANT Store, Cincinnati, Ohio. Greatest dry goods bargains on earth. Agents and storekeepers supplied.

HELP WANTED

PARCEL Post and Income Tax Mean Hundreds Government jobs now available. "Pull" unnecessary. $65 to $150 month. Write immediately for free list of positions available. Franklin Institute, Dep't B 30, Rochester, N. Y.

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WE Pay 25c Each for Farmer's Names. Send dime for contract. Sun, Leroy, Mich.

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FREE Illustrated Book Tells of About 300,000 protected positions in U. S. service. Thousands of vacancies every year. There is a big chance here for you, sure and generous pay, lifetime employment. Just ask for booklet S-1034. No obligation. Earl Hopkins, Washington, D. C.

GET Prepared for Government Examinations by former United States Civil Service Secretary-Examiner. No "Free Preparation" or "Positions Guaranteed" schemes. Straight proposition. "Real Courses." Booklet without obligation. Arthur Robert Patterson, Rochester, N. Y.

MEN for Motormen and Conductors; Interurban roads in your vicinity. Experience unnecessary; about $80 monthly; no strikes, state age. Electric 770 Syndicate Trust, St. Louis, Mo.

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I WILL Start You Earning $4 Daily at Home in spare time, silvering mirrors; no capital; free instructive booklet, giving plans of operation. G. F. Redmond, Dept. 400, Boston, Mass.

WE Pay $36 a Week and Expenses to Men with rigs to introduce poultry compound. Year's contract. Imperial Mfg. Co., Dept. 67, Parsons, Kans.

GOVERNMENT Farmers Wanted. Make $125 monthly. Free living quarters. Write Ozment, 68 F, St. Louis, Mo.

BE a Detective—Earn $25 to $75 Weekly; chance to see the world with all expenses paid. Loraine System, Dept. 312, Boston, Mass.

FEMALE HELP WANTED

LADIES Can Make Shields at Home; $10 Per 100; work sent prepaid to reliable women. Particulars for stamped addressed envelope. Eureka Co., Dept. 17, Kalamazoo, Michigan.

OF INTEREST TO WOMEN

BUTYFULSKIN" FACE CREAM AND ROUGE. No beautiful feminine face to attract your attention to this advertisement—The word "Butyfulskin" is enough in itself to do so. I ask you to give these toilet articles a trial, and let them speak for themselves. Money back if not satisfied. Write for particulars and prices, naming this journal, to V. M. Jones, 2324 Valentine Ave., New York City.

LADIES: A Handy Needle Case for Your work basket, with 50 assorted gold eyed German needles, also 35 assorted bodkins, darning, sail, bag, canvas, felt and silk needles, some of which could not be bought at your stores at any price, sent for 4c in stamps to introduce them to housewives. Benetol Distributing Co., Minneapolis, Minn.

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GUARANTEED Watch or Gold Plated Bracelet free to boys and girls for placing sample packets seeds with friends. P. People's Co., B 10, York Haven, Pa.

FREE Beautiful Watch: Boys or Girls, Anywhere. Send name and address for particulars. Bowman, West Falmouth, Mass.

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THE FAIRY CORNER

HELPING JOHNNY.

"There is no sense in it!" declared Rosebank, firmly "The idea, Johnny, of your saying that you can't be through your studying by nine o'clock."

"Well, I can't" reiterated Johnny.

"I'd like to know why!" retorted his father, with vigor. "When I was a boy I had just as much school work to do as you, and I had it done by eight o'clock, besides splitting the kindling and milking the cow! I——"

'Gee! I'd like to milk a cow!" broke in Johnny.

"It's ridiculous!" pursued his parent, oblivious of his offspring's bucolic yearnings. "Why, I'll warrant that I could take all your lessons and learn them inside of forty minutes! And I haven't looked at a schoolbook in years. All it needs is a little common sense and application, which——"

"Gee!" said Johnny. "You try it! Here's my jography an' my history an' Inglish an' 'rithmetic—say, what are the capitals of all the States? It's hard to find 'em on the map!"

"Do you mean to say," cried Roseback, in horror, "that you are ignorant of the capitals? Why, when I was a boy I knew them by heart before I was 8! Maine, Augusta; New Hampshire, Concord; Vermont,—er—Bennington——"

"Montpelier!" cried Johnny, joyously. "You made a mistake, dad! What's Idaho?"

"Salt Lake City," said Rosebank. Then he glared at his son. "I wish you wouldn't stretch your mouth and grimace so when you think you're laughing!" he declared. "There is nothing to laugh at anyway! That was a mere slip of the tongue—of course I know it is Ogden that is the capital of Idaho."

"Ogden!" scoffed Johnny. "That's in Utah, dad! What's New Mex——"

"I think," said his father judicially, "that your mathematics is of more importance than geography; so we'll turn to that. Now, these problems in least common multiple are simple, exceedingly simple! I can't imagine why you had to use ten sheets of paper and finally burst into tears over them last evening! All you have to do is to get the factors of each number and then——"

"That ain't the way they do it at school!" Johnny broke in excitedly. "Teacher doesn't have us do 'em that way. You put the numbers all in a row and divide by two or three an' cancel and keep on dividing an'——"

"It strikes me," Rosebank said irritably, "that a school system is a mighty poor one that teaches you any such roundabout method as that! It is much more sensible to do it the simplest way—and, anyhow, so long as you get the answer right what difference does it make how you get it? Now let me show you. I'll do it my way and you do it yours, and we'll see—what are the numbers? 8, 16, 28, 64. Well, Johnny, the least common multiple is 584. And you're not through!"

"Gee!" said Johnny, bewildered. "I got 448. An' that's the answer in the back of the book, too!"

"It must be a misprint!" said Rosebank, frowning, as he reached for the book and surveyed the answers. "Frequently there are misprints in arithmetic books——"

"Aw, you didn't cancel an 8!" declared Johnny, who had been surveying his father's figures. "That's why your answer is wrong!"

"You seem to know so much about it," broke in his father irritatedly, "that I fail to see why you should make such hard work of getting your problems! What did you ask me to show you for if you were going to be disrespectful and know it all? Your manners need attending to. I think you can easily do the rest of those problems without help. Where are you in history? I've been intending for a long time to oversee your studies and direct you."

"Say," asked Johnny, eagerly, "why did they have the French and Indian War?"

"Why," Rosebank said, with great kindness, "the French hadn't been treating the Indians right, and the Indians resented it and led by Massasoit——"

"Gee, paw," interrupted Johnny, puzzled, "it was the French and Indians who was fighting the English, and, anyhow, Massasoit was dead years ago an'——"

"Johnny," said his father with great restraint, but with a tremendous frown, "you go right to bed! Here it is nine o'clock again and your lessons not done! And after my helping you, too! After this you can depend upon yourself, young man, instead of getting some one else to do all the work!"

MA'S BREAD.

"Ma," said pa, "did you see where that there master baker said
That the housewives of today didn't know how to make bread?
That struck me all of a heap! What fool things some people say!
And I wondered at my work if today was bakin' day?"
Then ma went an' brung a cloth an' unrolled it where he sot,
An' a loaf o' bread rolled out on a platter smokin' hot.

An' pa said: "That is the stuff! That's a world perfumin' dream!"
Then ma brung some butter out, an' some coffee an' some cream.
An' pa pulled the loaf apart into great big smokin' chunks,
An' the golden butter went on to it in yellow hunks.
An' each of us took a chunk of my mother's homemade bread:
An' pa chuckled when he told what the master baker said.

An' my mother sot an' smiled at the things my father said.
An' she blushed a little bit at his praises of her bread.
An' he picked the last crumbs up, an' he give my ma a look
An' he said the best of it was that he could kiss the cook!
Ma said: "Stop your foolishness with the children settin' here!"
But dad didn't stop at all, an' ma didn't seem to keer.

An' dad told her: "When I git your hot bread in my mouth
I feel like a little boy—all my troubles has gone South:
An' I feel like I was just home from fishin' in the creek
An' so tired and hungry that both my legs was feelin' weak.
An' that mother stood by me with a hunk o' smokin' bread—
Guess I'll kiss the cook again!" That is what my father said

WOMAN'S WIT.

There was, once upon a time, a Senegal tailor, who had a daughter as dazzling as the sun. All the youths in the neighborhood were in love with her beauty, and two of them went to her and asked for her hand. The girl, like a well-trained daughter, made them no answer, but called her father, who listened to them and said:

"It is late; go home, and come again tomorrow. I will tell you then which of you shall have my daughter."

At daybreak the next morning the young men were at his door.

"Here we are," they cried; "remember what you promised us yesterday."

"Wait," said the tailor; "I must go out and buy a piece of cloth; when I return you will hear what I expect you to do."

He soon returned, and calling his daughter, said to the young men:

"My sons, there are two of you, and I have but one daughter. I cannot give her to both of you and must refuse one. You see this piece of cloth? I will cut from it two pairs of breeches exactly alike; each of you shall make one of them, and the one that finishes first shall be my son-in-law.

Each of the rivals took his task and prepared to set to work under the tailor's eyes. The latter said to his daughter, "Here is thread; you can thread the needles for the workmen."

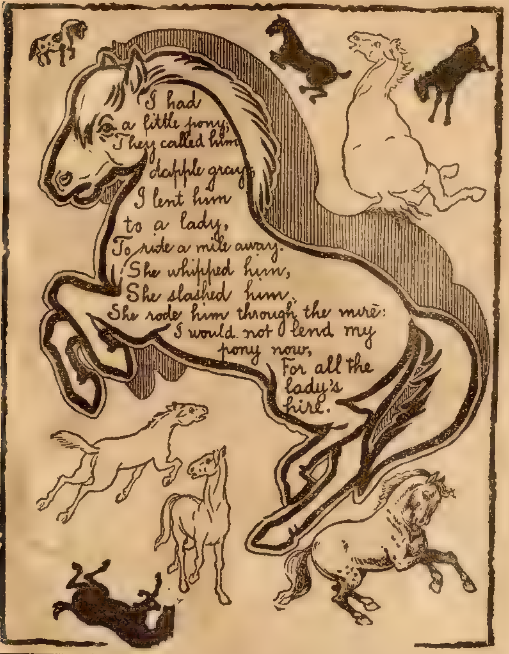
The girl obeyed; she took the spool and sat down by the youths. But the pretty witch was full of cunning; her father did not know which one she loved, neither did the young men, but, for her part, she knew very well. The tailor went out, the girl threaded the needles, and her suitors set to work. But to the one she loved she gave short needlesful, while she gave long needlesful to his rival. Both sewed zealously; at eleven o'clock the work was scarcely half done, but at three in the afternoon the young man with the short needlesful had finished his task, while the other was far behind. When the tailor returned the victor carried in the finished breeches. His rival was still sewing

"My children," said the father, "I did not wish to show any partiality between you, for which reason I divided the cloth into two equal parts and gave each a fair chance. Are you satisfied?"

"Perfectly," answered they. "We understood, your meaning and accepted the trial; what is to be will be!"

But the tailor had reasoned to himself: "He who finishes his task first will be the better workman, and consequently the better fitted to support his household." It did not occur to him that his daughter might outwit him by giving the longer needleful to the one she did not wish to win. Woman's wit decided the contest, and the girl chose her husband herself.

MOTHER GOOSE RHYMES



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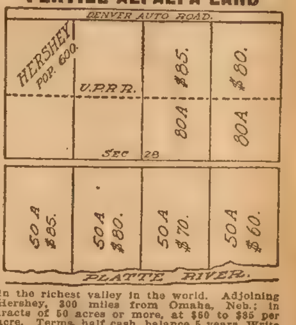

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GENTLE JABS

A contented man may be too lazy to kick.

If a man is handsome he exaggerates to himself.

Never judge a man's knowledge by what he says.

Hens can moult, but fat people have no such sinecure.

As for trouble—the supply always exceeds the demand.

Men who can be bought imagine that they can't be caught.

The deserving poor are usually those who don't deserve to be.

It's far easier to call a spade a spade than it is to swing a pick.

Every time a small man is called upon to lay a corner stone he cackles.

A man's sins find him out eventually, but his wife usually beats them to it.

Every dog has his day and every rooster takes the morning for his very own.

The man who is handy around the house usually isn't much good anywhere else.

One way to keep the boys on the farm is to install a motor to turn the grindstone.

A woman seldom knows what she wants until she discovers that she can't get it.

It is hard to laugh at misfortune after you have run into a rocking chair in the dark.

The man who tries to run an automobile on a wheelbarrow income deserves a jolt.

Even the man who knows it all seldom gets a chance to tell it after he gets married.

When a man lives a double life he may have to do two men's work, so what's the use?

If a man is too proud to beg and too honest to steal, what business has he in politics?

Of course, experience is valuable, but nearly every man you meet is willing to swap for money.

Love may laugh at the locksmith, but it will refuse to smile over a lock of the wrong woman's hair.

Many a man rides downtown on the water wagon in the morning—and tries to walk back that night.

When a small boy overhears the doctor telling his mother to take plenty of exercise, that's his cue to be good.

A Kansas judge has decided that a man is the owner of his wife's clothes. If her new bonnet costs too much to suit him he can wear it himself.

PEPPERS

A Clever Ruse.

An Irishman took a contract to dig a well. When he had dug about twenty-five feet down he came one morning and found it had fallen in and that it was filled nearly to the top.

Pat looked cautiously around and saw that no person was near, then took off his hat and coat and hung them on a windlass, crawled into some bushes and awaited events.

In a short time the neighbors discovered that the well had fallen in, and, seeing Pat's hat and coat on the windlass, they supposed that he was at the bottom of the excavation.

Only a few hours of brisk digging cleared the loose earth from the well. Just as the excavators had reached the bottom and were wondering where the body was, Pat came out of the bushes and good-naturedly thanked the diggers for relieving him of his job.

Three Useless Hints.

President Wilson, thanks in part to his training at Princeton, but thanks in greater part to his tact, is said to receive and dismiss visitors more adroitly than any former occupant of the White House.

Sometimes, however, a stupid visitor turns up, and then President Wilson's tact is unappreciated, and the visitor overstays his time. Apropos of such visitors, the President at a luncheon in Washington told a story.

"There was an old fellow," he said, "who was praising the rising young lawyer of the town.

" 'George, for a busy man,' said the old fellow, 'is one of the pleasantest chaps I ever met. Why, I dropped in on him for a social call this morning, and hadn't been chattin' with him more than fifteen minutes before he'd told me three times to come and see him again!' "

The Waiter's Price.

It was a banquet where a notable gathering of politicians had assembled. A certain aspiring young attorney was among the number, and as he spied an influential judge at the far end of the parlor he called the head waiter, slipped half a dollar into his hand, and whispered: "Put me next to Judge Spink at the table."

Upon being seated, however, he found he was at the other end of the room from the Judge.

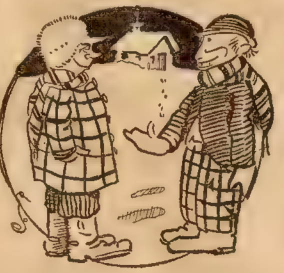
He called to the head waiter to explain.

"Well, sir," replied the official, "the fact is that the Judge gave me a dollar to put you as far from him as possible."

Just His Luck.

Graham B. Nichol, who, being the best poker player in the national capital, plays with some of Washington's biggest and richest men, was being told one morning of a game the evening before when a stranger had lost an immense sum of money.

"That's always my luck!" lamented Nichol. "Whenever there's a lot of soup around I'm about twelve blocks away with a fork in my hand."



Judd Ward—"Bill Purdy's dog bit Lew six times."

Gene Woods—"Bill's dog has a license, you know."

Judd Ward—"But I don't think the license allows him to bite a man more'n once."

Critical.

Governor Blease of South Carolina, apropos of certain criticism of his recent pardoning of seventy-six convicts, said in Charleston:

"These people are always after me. They make me feel like old Aunt Chloe.

"Aunt Chloe's husband was ill, and a friend said:

" 'Has he been ill long, Aunt Chloe?'

" 'About free weeks, ma'am.'

" 'But is his illness critical?'

" 'Critical?' said Aunt Chloe. 'Well, I guess it is critical! And I jest wish you could see him when I bring him his gruel, or his broth, or his milk-toast. Why, he ain't satisfied with nothin'!' "

Daddy Meant Well.

Little Eva May was only a baby girl, but she objected when bedtime came round, as children will. Finally, father offered to lie on the bed till she fell asleep, and carried her off, greatly to the mother's delight.

The minutes passed—ten, fifteen, twenty—and at the end of half an hour mother began to wonder what had happened to father. She continued with her sewing, but, in a few moments, the silence was broken by a pit-a-pat of naked feet.

Nearer came the steps, and an instant later Eva May stood in the doorway, finger raised for silence.

"Hush, hush, mummy!" she said; "I've got daddy off to sleep at last!"

The Bet Called Off.

Here is an alleged telephone colloquy, the speakers being a dignified housewife and a butcher's boy:

"Hello! Is this Mr. Blank's meat market?"

"It is."

"This is Mrs. Dash's house. Will you send me six mutton chops by 11 o'clock?"

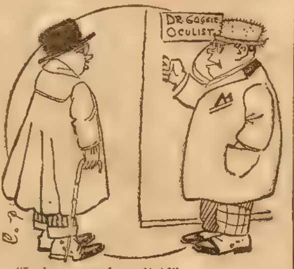
"Bet your sweet life!"

"See here, young man, do you know to whom you are talking?"

"Sure thing. You're Delia, Mrs. Dash's cook."

"You are much mistaken. This is Mrs. Dash herself."

"Aw, then, the bet's off; see!"



"Is he a good oculist?"

"I wouldn't trust him to treat the eye of a potato."

Poor Taste.

The christening party consisted of the proud father, the baby—a girl—the grandfather and the rest of the folks. The grandfather stood nearest the priest during the ceremony.

"What's the child's name?" asked the priest of the grandfather, at the appropriate moment.

"I dunno," the grandfather replied. And he turned to the father and whispered hoarsely: "What's its name?"

"Hazel," replied the father.

"What?" asked the grandfather.

"Hazel," repeated the father.

The grandfather threw up his hands in disgust.

"What d'ye think av that?" he asked the priest. "With the calendar av the saints full av gur-rl names—an' him namin' his after a nut!"

Dear Ancestors.

Two close-fisted Missouri brothers sued a neighbor for $375 owing on a land deal. They engaged the best lawyer in their county seat.

The lawyer won the case. The brothers called to see about his fee. One stayed outside and the other went in.

"How much is it?" he asked.

"Well," said the lawyer, "I won't be hard on you. I have known both you boys since you were children, and I knew your pap. I guess three hundred dollars will be about right."

The inquiring brother went out dazed.

"Lordy, George," he said to the one outside, "I'm durn glad he didn't know grandpap, too!"

Changed His Mind.

John L. Sullivan met with some amusing incidents while giving boxing lessons.

One day a husky young man came to him as a pupil. He took his boxing lesson and went home somewhat the worse for wear.

When he came for his second lesson he said: "Mr. Sullivan, it was my idea to learn enough about boxing from you to be able to give a certain young gentleman a good licking. I've had it in for him a good while. But I've changed my mind. If you have no objections I'll send this young man down here to you to take the rest of my lessons for me."

Algy—"You say she only partially returned your affections?"

Clarence—"Yes, she returned all the love letters, but retained all the jewelry."

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Gilly's Snake Dance

Or, Boy Scouts in the Desert By William Rossman Andrews

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[illegible] No. 52, December 27. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER III.

"WELL," exclaimed Gilly at the end of the newspaper account "what a shame! And do you know, I saw a man sizing up the Thurston house yesterday in a way that seemed queer. I think he was being watched by another. One of them must know more about the robbery than he'd like to admit. I hope he's caught."

The rest heartily agreed with him. The strange case furnished them food for discussion for a good part of the journey. Many tourists going to the Indian ceremony were aboard. At the railroad station all kinds of conveyances were in demand. But our party was not obliged to put up with anything. Acting on the forethought of an older head, Ted had telegraphed his father's instructions to the biggest livery establishment. This resulted in Mr. Clifford's getting a refusal of a light delivery wagon—such it had been in its palmy days, but its paint had disappeared long ago, blistered off in the scorching heat of 120 and even 140 degrees. Ted looked in surprise at the animals brought forth to furnish the motive power of their desert trip. He expected to see two horses, but as the Irishman said "The horses were mules."

Mr. Clifford bought two burros, besides, for carrying extra things. He and the boys would ride in the wagon, adding [illegible] to the load. Perhaps you may believe that this doesn't sound like [illegible] the desert—no camels and Arabs clad in white burnooses. But right here in our own country we have vast stretches of land as much a desert as the Sahara, where travelers go miles and miles between oases, and sometimes die from thirst before reaching them.

Ted asked why horses were not used, and Gilly explained that they cannot stand the terrific heat as well as the other animals. The burros, he learned, are capable of greater hardships than any of their larger four-legged brethren. The burro also has the power of smelling water a long way off.

"I heard of one case," informed Gilly, "where a burro broke loose and made its way ten miles. Its master tried to catch up with it, fearing that he would die. Without pack animals a traveler can't go far. The man was parched with thirst. He wanted to overtake his burro and hurry to the next water-hole. When he caught up with the elusive beast, he found the burro had refreshed himself at a spring near a sentinel palm, and was calmly waiting for him to come and get his drink."

Ted leaned on his alpine staff while listening. As Gilly finished a dark creature having ten fuzzy legs and a thick, repulsive body flashed across the glistening alkali sand and started up the stick.

Ted looked at it in fascinated interest. It seemed like an overgrown spider. The ones he had seen in the East were harmless. He had picked up many a daddy-longlegs or a money-spinner and idly watched them tread lightly over his hand and up his coat sleeve, finally setting them down with a good luck wish.

But Gilly was not watching with any lazy interest or kindly feeling. Alarm lit up his features instantly. Mr. Clifford had gone to get the wagon loaded.

"Drop that stick!" yelled Gilly. "That's a tarantula. His bite is deadly—almost as bad as a rattlesnake's."

Young Evans needed no second bidding. He dashed the alpine stick to the ground, and it was done just in time. The next moment the poisonous creature reached where Ted's hand had been. Gilly quickly thrust the point of his own staff into the tarantula. His aim was good. One blow crushed out its life.

If Ted had held the stick perfectly still the insect might have run over his hand without biting him. As long as nothing alarms the creature it will run along minding its own business. But the slightest movement excites its fear. Then it exercises its awful power of self-protection. But the lad would probably have moved his hand just about the time the tarantula reached it, if he had not [illegible] it up, without somebody near to warn him.

They went to the wagon, Ted congratulating himself on his escape.

The provisions being loaded consisted of only the necessaries, with the exception of a few canned goods. Mr. Clifford wanted to avoid bulky things. They would soon disappear, compelling the campers to return to some point to stock up again. This is not convenient when you are [illegible] away from civilization. That was the reason why he took [illegible] the essentials.

There were several sides of bacon, which [illegible] and camper's [illegible] grease for frying [illegible] soup when the denizens of the wilderness like to remind themselves of a "course dinner" and it has [illegible]—a curious one unknown to the camping novice. It helps to piece out the burro's meals by giving the faithful animal rinds to chew [illegible] close to the outside of the [illegible] which otherwise would be thrown away, [illegible] a nutritive part of his diet and [illegible] a delightful tidbit to rejoice [illegible] heart.

Rice was taken along, because a little of it goes a long way. It does not take up much space and swells considerably in the pot. It tastes good in the soup. Potatoes and onions were included, but not many of the former, for they are bulky, as you know if you ever tried to carry a bushel of them very far! Because beans swell like the rice they were on the list. A good deal of flour was put in the wagon. Several cans of condensed milk, sugar, tea, coffee and bottled [illegible] were part of the supplies.

[illegible] the cooking utensils were stowed [illegible] the seat. Ted failed to see any [illegible] enamel ware. It would not stand the [illegible]. The frying pan was [illegible] the kind a washerwoman could beat hubby with if he insisted on smoking his pipe around the house and watching her work instead of getting out and hustling too! There were no tin plates. What? Surely china was not taken along? No. They were made of aluminum. Besides being of light weight they were easier to keep clean.

[illegible] blankets and the rest of the [illegible] were arranged in the wagon or secured on the two pack animals.

At length the journey began. Mr. Clifford and the boys sat on the seat in their shirt sleeves, [illegible] wearing a wide-brimmed sombrero. [illegible] Ted had on [illegible]-colored khaki scouts' trousers and [illegible] open at the throat. Mr. Clifford was dressed in an old pair of trousers and a gray shirt. He wore an old felt hat of the same color.

Their route reminded one of a country road. Numerous wagon ruts had been worn in the trail. The travelers stayed on the direct line to the next water-hole. Clifford was not anxious to attempt any unnecessary exploring in a region that means death to the incautious and reckless.

The trip proceeded leisurely. The snake [illegible] covered [illegible] days. While some of the tourists wanted to see it all, the three campers were indifferent to the [illegible] part of the ceremony, occupying seven days. The picturesque and uncanny features came last.

"How do you manage to build the fire without wood?" inquired Ted, when camp was pitched for the night. "Don't see any cords of hickory, pine, or anything like that," he added facetiously.

Mr. Clifford pointed to a tall, spindly cactus. "That is kind enough sometimes to accommodate us," he said.

Ted glanced at the towering, ungainly-looking tree somewhat skeptically. It was green and appeared too succulent to burn. But the outside was not the part Mr. Clifford had in mind. Just under the skin, he explained, were numerous spiny ribs which served to hold the pulpy flesh in place. They gave the plant a certain corrugated effect. They looked like long wrinkles. The ribs furnished the fuel. But time would be necessary to cut down and trim one of the big cactuses. There was a quicker way to get firewood, and he pointed to a leafless shrub five feet high whose branches seemed all joints.

"Cut some of that, Gilly," he said presently. "Won't seem like hard work, and hacking away at the cactus will."

It was greasewood. Gilly had to go a hundred yards. He raised his hatchet. But instead of bringing it down with a businesslike stroke, he was seen to drop it and jump aside as if he had been stung by a bee.

"What's the matter?" shouted his father, grasping a shotgun and holding it ready to thrust in the hollow of his shoulder. He suspected the cause of Gilly's quick movement. "Snake?"

"Yes, a sidewinder," the boy called back. (It is the most dangerous reptile of the desert because of its supposed power of attacking a foe sideways with as much ease as from the front.) "He's coiled on the other side of the bush."

A little closer and the lad would have been too near for the rattlesnake's liking.

"I'll attend to his case," vowed Mr. Clifford the moment he located his snakeship.

The weapon came up to his shoulder. He squinted along the barrel, setting his aim like a practiced sharpshooter. A flash, a puff of blue smoke, and a sharp crack.

Ted came running up, and the [illegible] advanced cautiously on the snake's lair. The head had been blown from the body. For all that Mr. Clifford suddenly shouted a warning.

"Look out, boys!" he yelled, consternation in his voice. "There's its mate to the right."

He quickly worked the ejector and threw another shell into the breech chamber. A moment later the air resounded with a second report. The second rattler met death as instantaneously as the first.

"A tarantula and two snakes before we're more than a few hours on the journey," commented Gilly, grimly. "Things are certainly getting exciting. [illegible] street was never like this."

"Nor [illegible]," volunteered Ted [illegible] at the [illegible] of events.

Gilly [illegible] and then helped get things under way. [illegible] who had camped considerably in his time, he was [illegible] in cooking this camper's [illegible].

First he fried the bacon. When cooked it was put on one of the [illegible] plates. The [illegible] was reserved to grease the pan, a little being poured in for each cake, which was [illegible] of enough batter to cover the whole bottom.

He watched the edges, and the moment they got brown, tossed the cake in the air. It flopped over, the [illegible] side falling in the pan. His practiced hand enabled him to hold the utensil in the right position to catch the cakes inside the rim.

The keen air gave everybody a good appetite. The moment the sun went down it got chilly. More fuel was heaped on the fire, and in the cheerful glow the two talked of scout matters, [illegible] and the strange occurrence back in Los Angeles.

Before rolling up in their blankets Mr. Clifford [illegible] new [illegible] from the wagon and laid it on the ground [illegible] the [illegible]. It would [illegible] away [illegible] to come near them. They [illegible] the rough, [illegible] of [illegible]. The information [illegible] to Ted. Young Evans [illegible] would be [illegible].

While no dangerous [illegible] they heard now [illegible] the [illegible] disturbing to some of the [illegible].

CHAPTER V

THE next morning they all rose with the sun. Gilly [illegible] fresh greasewood and [illegible] had a [illegible] fire going. The coffee was soon brewing, its savory odor making the campers sniff in anticipation.

Presently they sat down to breakfast. Everything tasted good. Mr. Clifford

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cooked the bacon and served it with a flourish. It might have been a famous chef's elaborate course—or mother's choicest dish! The meal over, the packing began. This occupied only a short time, and somewhat later they started.

Numerous horsemen passed them. Many were cowboys who had ridden far to take in the dance. Others were city dwellers riding hired nags obtained at the railroad. It seemed as if there were enough people to populate a small community.

After a few hours' travel the trio were hardly able to recognize one another, between the thick clouds of tawny alkali dust which rose from the beating hoofs of their animals and those of the other travelers.

"The Painted Desert is well named," exclaimed Gilly, with a grin. "Not on account of its wonderful colors in sky, rock, and sand, but the dust enveloping us. Looks as if we were just dipped in a barrel of corn meal."

He appeared to have no eyebrows at a distance, they were so loaded with the fine effacing dust. It was the same with Ted. And as for Mr. Clifford, he seemed to have lost his beard in a yellow landslide.

For all this apparent concealment from the encrusting alkali, Gilly thought he recognized one of the riders. Along in the afternoon, a man rode so close that Gilly saw under the yellowish powder his suit was navy blue. As the newcomer turned to get a look at the strangers, his hollow sockets attracted notice.

"Why, I think he's the man I saw watching the Thu[illegible]ton house," whispered the lad.

"You don't say," exclaimed his father, in a low tone, gazing curiously at the man, who returned the glance unconcernedly and rode on. "Are you sure? It doesn't seem likely that a fugitive from justice would select a crowded place such as the Indian village becomes during the Snake Dance. Still, it's so out of the way compared with cities and towns along the main line of travel, this might be his idea of throwing his pursuers off the scent. If Bulldog were close by, I might think that the mine owner was going to meet the thief here," he speculated slowly. He paused and then looked up suddenly. "We don't know for sure anything about him. His being in the neighborhood when you first saw him might be a mere coincidence."

"Hadn't we better notify the sheriff?" asked Gilly.

Mr. Clifford shook his head.

"No, son, not until we learn more about him. I wouldn't like to cast suspicion on a man who might be as innocent as we are of the robbery."

The lad felt the same, yet there seemed something queer about the whole proceeding.

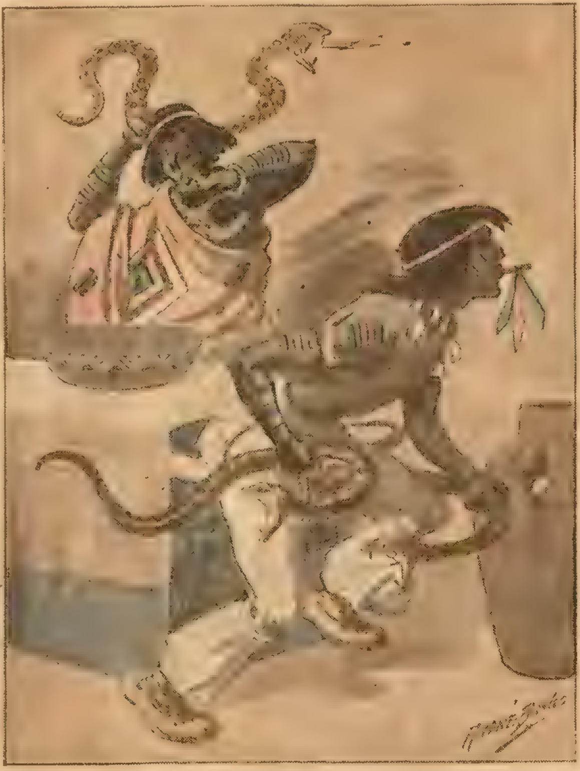
"Didn't you say that you saw another man, one who appeared to be keeping an eye on this rider who just passed?" suddenly asked Clifford.

"Yes," Gilly answered promptly. "But his actions were quite unmistakable. He was watching the man in the blue while the latter was sizing up the house. In light of what we've read since, he might have been a detective."

"In that case," controverted Mr. Clifford, "it doesn't seem likely for the pursued to escape—quite difficult when the sleuth is right on his heels, almost literally."

"Well, I give it up—for the present, anyway," announced Gilly in some bewilderment. "Perhaps, after all, it's best to leave the matter to the authorities. They must have got sufficient clews to get on the trail of the right man."

His first impulse on reading the newspaper had been to go back and offer his new-found friends help, and now with the sudden appearance of the man who had been hovering mysteriously around their house, there was a revival of the vague though generous feeling.


The priest dipped in several times.

He wanted to follow the man in blue. Even if he discovered nothing about him tangibly showing a hand in the robbery, a strict watch might reveal something definite. Gilly was convinced that the man knew a great deal. How much, the lad would have given a whole lot to know. The supposition was prompted by a sort of sixth sense. But Gilly was in no position to do anything. He rode on in a kind of depressed silence.

CHAPTER V.

FINALLY the mesa on which the village was situated came in sight. The reddish sides of the flat-topped table-land shone in the brilliant sun. On the east end was discernible the irregular outline of the pueblo roofs.

The mules and burros seemed to realize how near they were to the destination, and the rest from weary desert toil in store for them during the next few days. They pricked up their long, flapping ears.

"Hee, haw! hee, haw!" the burros lifted up their voices and brayed.

"Oh, you happy canaries, sing on! We'll soon be there," cried Gilly, gleefully.

At length the travelers arrived at the mesa. They wanted a camping spot near the ceremonies, without being too near. For they had heard that sometimes a snake got loose and wriggled toward the spectators.

A rocky incline enabled them to drive to the top. They passed close to the houses. Some were three stories high, and all were built of rough stones plastered with adobe mud. The other houses were one and two stories tall, and were close together. They looked like tiers of seats at a circus arena, the roof of a one-story house forming a terrace for the front entrance of a second-story abode, and the roof of this in turn serving the same purpose for the three-story affair. Ladders were seen everywhere, and some of the lowest houses were entered solely by the aid of these, as there were no doors or windows. An occupant had to climb the ladder to the roof, then he pulled the ladder after him, lowered it on the inside and descended to his home.

The level plain swarmed with people. There were Indian men, women, and children; curious visitors, who roved at will, gazing at the inhabitants and peering in nooks and crannies with wide-open eyes.

The inhabitants were a picturesque lot. The Moki bucks wore white muslin trousers, colored calico shirts, and rawhide moccasins. A band kept their stiff black locks out of their eyes. Some had rings and wampum or silver necklaces. Here and there was seen a black or blue velvet tunic, proclaiming its fortunate owner an Indian of means, according to the Moki standard.

The women, too, had their finery, silver bracelets wrought by native smiths and other metal trinkets. The dress was quite free from the complicated machinery of a white woman's apparel. An indigo blanket thrown over the right shoulder and tied at the waist with a sash of rip-roaring color combinations completed, with sandaled feet, the costume of the squaws and maidens.

The three visitors, whose advent caused no stir among the swarming concourse, there were so many people on the mesa, drove by slowly in order to take in the sights leisurely.

There was no place near the dance plaza vacant, and Mr. Clifford had to pitch camp in the rear of the village. As their wagon lumbered along it passed a number of papooses playing on the ground.

Suddenly a noise in the rear made Gilly turn his head. A horse had broken away and was running toward the group of Indian children. In a few moments the frantic animal would dash among them. The Boy Scout leaped from his seat and rushed toward the horse. As it came up, Gilly jumped for the bridle. The weight of his body pulled down the head of the maddened creature. The action took its mind off of whatever had caused the fright, and was the means of reducing its speed.

But the horse did not stop until its fore hoofs almost touched one of the Indian children. The small copper-colored body would have been crushed if the horse's dash had not been checked.

A squaw rushed out suddenly from nowhere, and amid cries of joy from other Indian women appearing with her, picked up the youngster. A crowd collected, among them a tall Indian of dignified bearing. It proved to be the chief of the tribe. Gilly learned to his astonishment that he had saved the life of the son of so important a personage. The Indian was grateful, and expressed a wish to grant him a favor. The lad had no wish to put the redman under an obligation for performing a humane act, and signified by a shake of the head his desire of no reward.

But the chief was not satisfied. He pondered a moment, then his face brightened. Everybody edged closer to hear what he was going to say.

"You come to see heap [illegible]

Gilly nodded, wondering what was on his questioner's mind, and what the query was leading up to. The Indian grunted. Then he pointed to an opening of an underground chamber hewn out of the solid rock, a hundred yards away.

"Pretty soon priest wash snakes in kivi," he informed Gilly, impressively. "Nobody see. Always secret. No Moki, except holy men, go inside. But you," pointing to Gilly, then to Ted, and finally to Mr. Clifford, "you enter and see all. I, the chief of all the Mokis, say it."

Gilly bowed gravely, and the chief, feeling that he had conferred the highest favor possible in his power, smiled contentedly. Then he took a silver ring carved in the shape of a serpent and handed it to the preserver of his child.

"Always wear it, and evil spirits will never harm you," declared the chief, solemnly. The Indian gazed silently at Gilly's Boy Scout insigna and uniform. They seemed to convey a meaning. "You warrior," the chief interpreted slowly.

"No, a Boy Scout," corrected Gilly, pleasantly.

His listener's eyes brightened at the last word.

"Ah, yes, scout," he cried in self-enlightment, his memory going back to the days of warring with the enemy before the mysterious Indian Department tabooed that pleasant recreation. "I understand." He turned to Mr. Clifford, a smile of fatherly recognition flitting over his sunburnt features, as he saw the resemblance. "He fine young brave. You heap proud of him."

CHAPTER VI.

"YOU'RE certainly in luck," declared one of the white bystanders after the chief departed. And the rest gazed enviously at the fortunate three who were going to see what the others could not.

When the crowd dispersed, the trio looked at one another.

"Well, the man was right," asserted Gilly. "We are in luck. Yet I feel that it is going to be an experience we won't want to repeat." He glanced at the ladder sticking out of the kivi. "We'll be getting a lot of thrills, I'm thinking."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Clifford. "But we won't be in any danger. The chief would not have suggested the visit if there were. We'll see the thing through."

An Indian, naked from the waist up, his arms and breast streaked with a zigzag line of white paint and an eagle feather stuck in the back of his inky black hair, came up and signed for them to follow him.

He led the way to the kivi, going down the ladder first. Mr. Clifford went next, then Gilly, and finally Ted. Fifteen feet below the surface was the floor. The chamber was about sixteen feet square, and dimly lighted with torches.

Thirty-four priests were squatted at one end, and the chief priest stood at an altar seemingly made with alternating layers of colored sand. After everything was quiet he uttered a fervent prayer. Then one of the holy men began singing. Four of the elders among them stationed themselves around a bowl filled with water taken from a sacred spring located scores of miles away.

After it was blessed by smoking and blowing their breath upon the surface, a signal sent others to a number of ollas, earthen jars, which contained snakes, principally rattlers, caught some days before by these same priests.

Brawny arms were thrust inside and quickly drawn back, the hands clutching two wriggling, beady-eyed serpents.

"Have their fangs been taken out?" whispered Ted.

"I've heard not," answered Mr. Clifford, in a low tone. "Wonderful how the snakes don't bite them."

Each reptile was passed to a priest stationed at the bowl, and dipped in several times, then flung over the man's head and across the room to the altar. This continued until all the snakes, a hundred and fifty, were put through the ceremony.

The thirty-four participants kept up a chanting cry until about half the number of reptiles had been washed. Then burst forth the Moki war cry.

"Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!" they yelled, in the most blood-curdling manner.

The effect was awful, and the three visitors began to feel that they had nerves, and pretty sensitive ones, too.

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But presently the horrible rite came to an end.

Needless to say the three whites were the first to scramble up the ladder. The chief greeted them as they came out, and he asked how they enjoyed themselves.

"Fine," said Gilly, trying to appear appreciative, while his mind was on the cold chills playing tag up and down his spine.

CHAPTER VII.

"WELL, you have nerves like iron," commented Mr. Clifford, as they went to their camp.

"Don't you believe it, father," Gilly promptly set him right. "Another moment and they'd have snapped in two."

"How about you?" was the tentative question put to Ted.

"If I claw the air in my sleep, you'll know that I'm trying to climb out of the kivi," he said, with a nervous laugh, "every snake's making for me."

"Don't know whether I showed good judgment in taking you there," Mr. Clifford self-accused.

"No regrets, father," Gilly hastened to assure his parent. "We understand your reason. The chief would have been affronted had we refused to take advantage of what he considered a great honor." He laughed merrily to show that he was not suffering any very bad effects. "There, I'm all right, and so is Ted." Young Evans grinned amiably in the starlight.

These assurances restored Mr. Clifford's peace of mind.

By the time the Snake Dance came off the next day they all were ready for it. A mixed gathering stood about the dance plaza. There were military men, civilians, Indians from other localities—the Navajos, Paituis, Apaches, Mohaves, Pimas, and even a far-distant Zuni—cowboys, miners, reporters, and Eastern tourists, besides a number of Western women.

Among the women who stood at a safe distance and viewed the proceedings, with impelling curiosity overcoming their timidity and fear, were the wife of a railroad president and the daughter of a Senator.

A buzzing murmur was heard. All eyes were turned to the kivi of another fraternity of priests, the Antelopes, who were to assist in the Dance. The men's naked backs and shoulders were zigzagged like the messenger's. Hanging from each girdle was an antelope skin, the fur side showing and the tip almost touching the ground behind.

A line, was formed and the priests marched with great dignity to the plaza. Here was a sort of bower made of cottonwood and called the "kisi." All the ollas holding the snakes were in the center.

Presently the Snake men marched from their kivi. They sprinkled sacred meal on the jars, made a noise with curious ceremonial rattles, and performed a weird dance around the bower. At length the priests broke up into groups of three, and advanced to a chief priest who had stationed himself at the jars.

He handed each man a snake. The squirming, venomous monster was placed in the mouth of the receiver. The man, who had been kneeling, rose quickly and started off with the arm of the second member of the trio around his shoulder. The third man fell in behind. The second man tickled the reptile into good nature with a snake whip at the first sign of restlessness. This subduing instrument was nothing more than a stick and two eagle feathers. The duty of the third man was to catch any serpent that might get loose and try to glide away.

"Look out!" cried Gilly to everybody in general around him once when this very accident happened. A breech in the middle of the crowd quickly opened, and the reptile was given a wide berth. But the "catcher" darted forward, and before the rattler was able to coil for defense, grabbed it back of the head. Then he handed it to his clumsy companion.

Groups of three fell in line until there was an endless chain of them, prancing around a given circuit on the plaza. The priests made frequent trips to the kisi, each time getting another snake. Finally every man had both hands full of the disgusting objects.

The sight made the spectators shudder, but the Mokis looking on from their housetops watched with feelings of deep reverence. It was like going to church with them.

The marching was kept up some time. Finally the chief priest stepped to the middle of the plaza and sprinkled a handful of sacred meal in the form of a circle. A signal followed. Then each man threw his snakes into the ring. Its center became a round mass of revolting and dangerous serpents. The snake ball was never still.

The chief priest sprinkled it with sacred meal, while another ritualist dipped his hand in the bowl and let drops of water fall on the repulsive creatures.

Another signal came. Each priest grabbed a snake and ran down the broad road. On the desert below the wriggling captives were released with reverent mutterings for the Indian gods to send the tribe rain for its crops.

"Well, that beats me!" declared Ted, impressed to a degree of gaping wonder for some moments after the ceremony.

Mr. Clifford said quietly that one sight of the Snake Dance was enough to last him a lifetime, with which Gilly agreed at once.

The lad glanced around at the spectators, as he had on all occasions since coming to the mesa. But there were no signs of the man in blue. He was around somewhere, that was sure, and probably had not missed any of the grewsome ceremonies. It just happened that he never came the scout's way. It did not seem likely that he was purposely avoiding Gilly.

As the lad moved aside to idly watch the crowd depart, his foot struck a package tied with white string. The papers had a legal aspect and had probably fallen out of somebody's pocket. He stooped and picked them up. Then he glanced around to see if any one showed by a searching gaze or agitated manner an anxiety to recover lost property.

But no such indication of ownership was apparent in the people near by. The lad unwound the cord and proceeded to investigate. The moment he unfolded the first document and read a line he gave vent to a smothered exclamation.

"Well, I declare, the name's Michael Thurston," he burst out. "We've found Mrs. Thurston's stolen papers." He handed them to his father. "Read and see if it sounds like a deed to property in Bulldog."

Mr. Clifford received the age-yellowed paper carefully. A few moments' reading confirmed the supposition.

"You're right, my son," said Mr. Clifford, his eyes beaming exultingly. "How fortunate. Now you will be the means of restoring this valuable document to your new-found friends." He mused a moment. "Well, well, what a coincidence! And to find them out here in the desert, hundreds of miles from the place where the theft took place." He looked up suddenly. "Evidently the thief is around. He will begin a thorough search for them the moment he discovers his loss." He folded the paper up quickly, and the action brought a look of puzzled inquiry to Gilly's face.

His father explained:

"Don't want it known that we have them," he said gravely. "Efforts would be made to take them from us. No telling to what lengths the thief might go to get his hands on them." This seemed quite reasonable. The people were surging about them, and the thief might be watching all this time. "Now——"

The sentence was never finished.

"Pardon me," broke in a smooth, steady voice.

The conclusion of this thrilling story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year and we have stories awaiting publication that you cannot afford to miss.

* * *

No Variety.

"He never! Lady Ann Peters, you're telling me an up-and-down, flat-footed no-such-a-thing!" protested Mrs. Bonney, incredulously.

"He did," reassured Mrs. Peters. "Florry was most weeping when she told me, and Floretta Coe ain't a crying woman, either. Nineteen quart jars! Steve Coe ought to be whipped."

"And he ain't even liable to get a tongue-lashing," rejoined Mrs. Bonney, regretfully. "Florry'll call it 'another of poor Steve's accidents,' I s'pose. But, Liddy Ann, I don't seem to take in just how it happened. He couldn't have et nineteen jars, even pint jars, and I understand you said quart?"

"Nineteen full jars of preserves, five pint jars of mustard pickle, seven tumblers of jelly, three bottles of piccalilli, and an odd relish or so," enumerated Mrs. Peters. "No, he didn't eat 'em all. Most of 'em he smashed when he clumb on the upper shelf trying to crawl out the little window, and waving his legs pretty wild when he stuck halfway. And he probably knocked over some more when he wriggled back and brought the shelf down with him. The rest he et. He was there two days——"

"My suz," ejaculated Mrs. Bonney. "Two whole days locked in a cellar cluset!"

"It might have been two whole weeks," said Mrs. Peters. "You see, they sent for Floretta to take care of her Aunt Louisy, who was took sick with rheumatic fever. It seems she got so sick that they had to have a regular nurse, so Floretta came home unexpected, as 'twere.

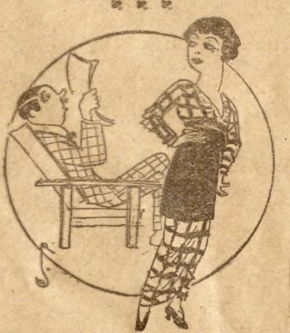
"Steve had been planning to make a visit on his cousins over to Norley while Floretta was away; but he wa'n't going till the day after she left. That evening he felt that he'd relish some quince with his supper; so he went down cellar after it. While he was in the closet the door blew shut, and when he tried to open it, lo and behold! the knob on the inside was gone. Floretta says she told him about it two weeks ago, but he forgot to put it on.

"Well, there he was in the dark, and he couldn't do a thing except yell and pound when he heard wheels on the road; but the cellar's at the back, and nobody heard the racket. When Florry got home, and let him out, he was plastered with jam and reeking with sirup, and there was ketchup in his hair, and he was so boiling, raging, roaring mad he couldn't talk straight. And he hasn't more'n half forgiven Florry yet."

"Forgiven Florry? What for?" demanded Mrs. Bonney.

"For not keeping a more varied assortment of victuals in her cellar cluset," rejoined Mrs. Peters, dryly. "He drank preserve juice and elderberry wine, and he et a little of everything, but he says he's going to loathe sweet things for the rest of his life. Of course there was pickles—but he says if you've once et pickled cauliflower immejitly following an extry rich preserved peach, and tried to wipe out the mixed flavor with a mouthful of barberry jelly, and when that didn't improve matters, gulped a big swallow of damson jam, and followed that up frantic with meat sauce—well, Florry didn't quote his remarks exact, and I guess 'twas just as well. But he's put his foot down firm; there's to be canned chicken and a jug of water kept in the storeroom, and the pantry, and every blessed provision cluset in the house, so's if he gets trapped again—he won't have to either starve or be 'fed to a living lollipop.' Steve has quite a gift of language, if he ain't got a mite of sense."

* * *



Mr. Pester—"Ah, well, truth is stranger than fiction."

Mrs. Pester—"Very much stranger. I seldom, if ever, encounter it in my home."

* * *

Bobbie Knew.

The teacher in natural history had received more or less satisfactory replies to her question, and finally asked:

"What little boy can tell me where the home of the swallow is?"

Long silence, then a hand waved.

"Well, Bobbie, where is it?"

"The home of the swallow," declared Bobbie, seriously, "is in the stummick."

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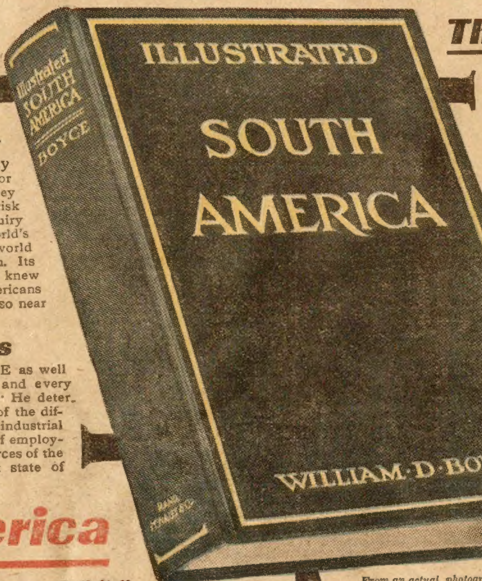

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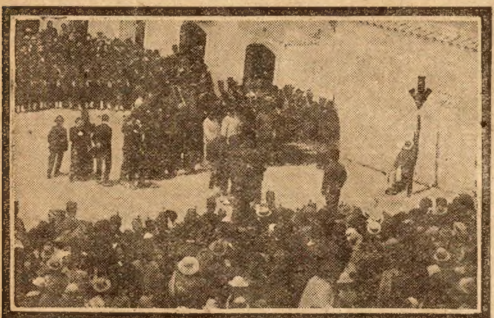

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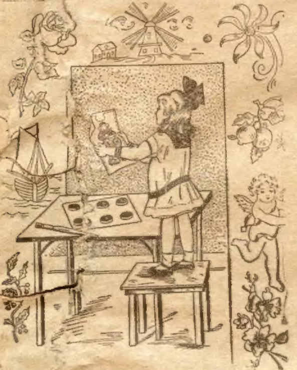

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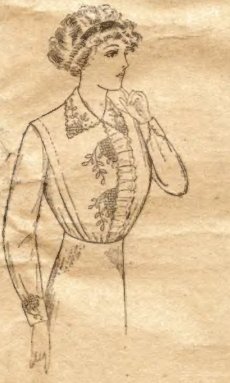

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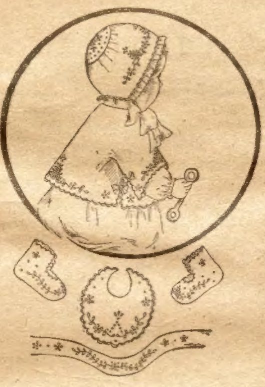
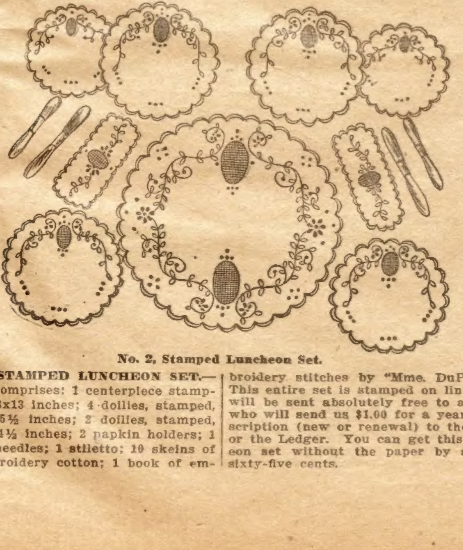


No. 8, Child's Set.

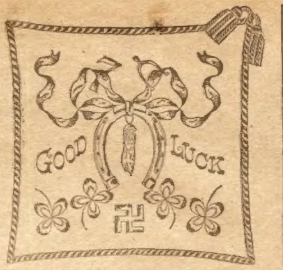
NO. 8, CHILD'S SET.—The set we illustrate above and which we are offering our readers is one that should and will please every mother. A complete set for baby, consisting of cape, cap, bib, belt, and a pair of bootees, all stamped on finest quality rep for punch work, and French embroidery.

Set as described sent free to any one who will send us $1.00 for a year's subscription (new or renewal) to either the Blade or the Ledger. You can get the child's set without the paper by sending fifty cents.



No. 2, Stamped Luncheon Set.

NO. 2, STAMPED LUNCHEON SET.—This set comprises: 1 centerpiece stamped, size 13x13 inches; 4 doilies, stamped, each 5½x5½ inches; 2 doilies, stamped, each 4½x4½ inches; 2 napkin holders; 1 package needles; 1 stiletto; 10 skeins of C. C. embroidery cotton; 1 book of embroidery stitches by "Mme. DuParque." This entire set is stamped on linon, and will be sent absolutely free to any one who will send us $1.00 for a year's subscription (new or renewal) to the Blade or the Ledger. You can get this luncheon set without the paper by sending sixty-five cents.



No. 16, Sofa Pillow.

NO. 16, SOFA PILLOW.—A Good Luck sofa pillow tinted in beautiful colors on art pillow cloth, size 22x22 inches, with back and mercerized cotton for working. Sent free to any one sending $1.00 for a year's subscription (new or renewal) to the Blade or the Ledger. Girdle will be included for a year's subscription to both the Blade and the Ledger at $2.00. This pillow will be sent without the paper for forty cents; with the girdle, fifty-five cents.

How To Gain Flesh.

A simple but sure way to increase the weight, it is asserted by several well known physicians, is to take regularly for several months, one or two 3 grain hypo-nuclane tablets after each meal. These little tablets have the distinguished merit of increasing the red and white blood corpuscles, aiding digestion and promoting assimilation and absorption of the elements in the food which go to make blood and solid tissues. They are obtainable in sealed packages. If unable to purchase hypo-nuclane tablets from your dealer, send 90c to the Blackburn Products Co., Dayton, Ohio.

FREE—Ladies' & Gent's Watches

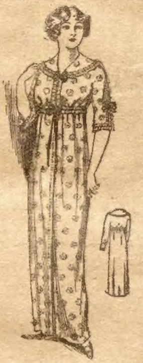
We give Ladies' and gent's size, Hunting and other styles to anyone for selling art post cards at 10c a packet. Order 20 packets now. When sold send $2.00 and we will send you FREE a stem-wind, open-set, thin model, highly engraved, [illegible]-year guaranteed watch. Other styles described with goods. Also signet ring and handsome chain sent FREE.
PALACE MFG. CO., Dept. 1 CHICAGO

PATTERN COUPONS FREE!

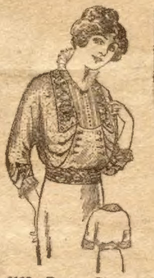
Hundreds of Patterns to Select From

The great difficulty in making one's own garments is to get suitable patterns. Our women readers could make many pretty and useful things for themselves and their children if they could get well-made patterns. We have arranged to give our readers a pattern service unexcelled.

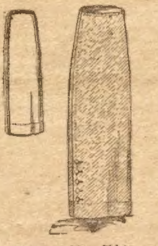
We make a splendid offer of the best and most fashionable patterns that can be produced by the greatest designers of New York and Paris, and what is more, these patterns will be within the reach of every one, and every one will have a wide selection to choose from. **Read our splendid Offer below.**



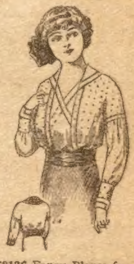
8124 Empire Negligee 34 to 42 bust.



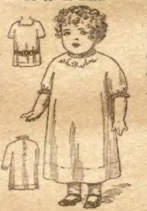
8122 Fancy Blouse, 34 to 44 bust.



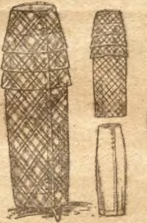
8066 Two-Piece Skirt; 22 to 32 waist.



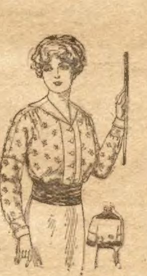
8126 Fancy Blouse for Misses and Small Women, 16 and 18 years.



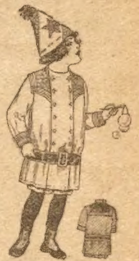
8125 Child's Dress, 6 mos. or 1 year and 2 years.



8123 Three-Piece Skirt 22 to 32 waist.



8072 Fancy Blouse, 34 to 42 bust.



8119 Boy's Suit, 2 to 6 years.

HOW TO GET THE FREE PATTERNS

Here is the way we will do it. To every one who will send us one dollar for a year's subscription to The Chicago Ledger we will send absolutely free five pattern coupons. Each coupon will be good for one pattern and you can select the patterns from those illustrated in any issue of The Chicago Ledger. When you see a pattern that you like all you have to do is to send us a coupon and it will be sent to you at once. In this way you will have hundreds of patterns from which to pick the five that you will be entitled to, and you have all the time you need to pick out the ones you want.

These patterns are the best that can be made. Each pattern gives full directions for the cutting and making with information as to the amount of cloth required, etc., so that any one can make any of the designs illustrated with no trouble at all. At the same time, they are so stylish and accurately cut that dressmakers and seamstresses all over the country will be quick to take advantage of this liberal offer. Some will subscribe for two years so they can get ten coupons. These designs are made by the best designers and modists of New York and Paris, and are up-to-the-minute in fashion and beauty.

We treat old and new customers alike on this splendid offer. If you are already a subscriber, send in a dollar and we will send you the five pattern coupons and extend your subscription one year from the time it now expires.

To get these five coupons entitling you to five patterns, fill out the blank below and enclose it with one dollar for a year's subscription to The Chicago Ledger. Do this now—today! No woman should be without the Ledger's Pattern Coupon Book. Be among the thousands of women who will get these coupons.

.... CUT THIS OUT AND SEND TO US ....

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New or Renewal

If you wish any pattern from those advertised in this issue, mark the number and size on the margin and we will retain a coupon for each pattern we send you when we send you the Coupon Book. (Order by size and number). **GOOD FOR ANY TIME.**

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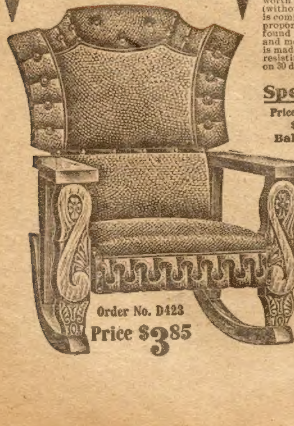
Spear's Big ROCKER BARGAIN

Order No. D423 Price $\$3^{85}$
Only 75c Cash—
Balance, 50c Monthly

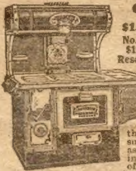
A large, roomy, comfortable, well made Rocker with wide, high back, fully tufted and buttoned. The seat is large and roomy and upholstered with high-grade black Sylvan leather over full steel springs and has beautiful ruffled edge to match back. Construction is solid hard wood throughout, high gloss, golden oak, "Kenwood" quarter-sawed finish.

30 Days' Free Trial



Order No. D423
Price $\$3^{85}$

Spear's Famous New "Royal Plymouth" Range

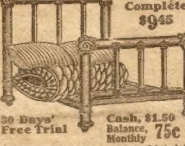


Cash $3
$1.50 Per Month
No. D2607. Price $19.95 without Reservoir.

Order No. D2606 Price $23.85 with Reservoir.

This is the great range that has caused such a sensation as the most amazing bargain ever offered. Easily worth $35. Yet our price is only $23.85 (without reservoir, $19.95). Every feature is complete and perfect. Oven is of same proportions and construction features found in the very highest priced ranges and measures 18 inches square. The body is made of Spear's celebrated P.P.P. rust-resisting steel. Full nickel trimmed. Sold on 30 days' Free Kitchen Trial.

Bed, Mattress, Spring, Pillows



Order No. D312
Complete
$\$9^{45}$

30 Days' Free Trial

Cash, $1.50
Balance, Monthly 75c

This handsome, complete Metal Bed Outfit, consisting of heavy, perfectly constructed Iron Bed, any color, 4 feet 6 inches wide; a good woven wire spring with all steel frame; 50-pound cotton top mattress; 2 feather pillows.

This is one of the great bargains that has made Spear famous the world over for the most remarkable low furniture prices to be had anywhere.

Spear's Latest "Crown" Adjustable Dress Form

Price $\$12^{45}$
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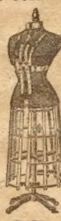
Balance 75c Monthly

This great new style dress form makes dressmaking easy and a pleasure. Helps you to dress in up-to-date fashion at small cost. Eliminates the discomfort of being fitted. Quickly solves every difficulty and does away with guesswork, disappointment, and saves expense and waste of valuable material.

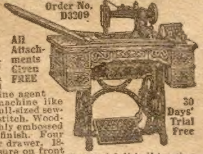
The following adjustments are possible: Bust measure, 32 to 43 in.; Neck measure, 12 to 15 in.; Waist measure, 20 to 31 in.; Hips, 35 to 49 in.; Length of back, 13 to 16 in.



Order No. D2540
30 Days' Free Trial

Spear's "Steinway" Sewing Machine

Price Complete, only $\$18^{45}$
$3.00 Cash—
Balance, $1.25 a Month
Warranted 10 Years



Order No. D3209

All Attachments Given FREE

30 Days' Trial Free

Spear's 5-Drawer "Steinway Special" Sewing Machine is an improved Drop Head style. No sewing machine agent could afford to sell a machine like this at such a price. Full-sized sewing head for double lock stitch. Woodwork is golden Oak, richly embossed design, high varnished finish. Four side drawers and center drawer. 18-inch transfer tape measure on front of table. The iron frame is ribbon design and full ball bearing which insures easy and quiet running.

Be Sure to Mail "Home Sweet Home" Coupon for FREE Catalogue

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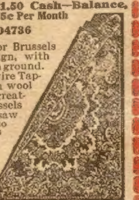
Dept. C, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Spear's Room-Size Brussels Rug Bargain

Only $\$11^{95}$
$1.50 Cash—Balance, 75c Per Month
Order No. D4736



Beautiful, high color Brussels Rug, red rose design, with green leaves and tan ground. Guaranteed full 9-wire Tapestry Brussels with wool facing. This is the greatest genuine Brussels Rug value you ever saw. It is perfectly safe to order direct from this advertisement, as we positively will refund your money if on receipt you are not perfectly satisfied with your bargain.

Size 9x12—

Spear's "HOME SWEET HOME" Coupon

SPEAR & CO.
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I would like to know all about the Spear Open Account, Easy Payment Plan for home furnishing. Please send me, free, your complete Bargain Catalogue with Prices, Terms and Information, without the slightest obligation on my part.

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